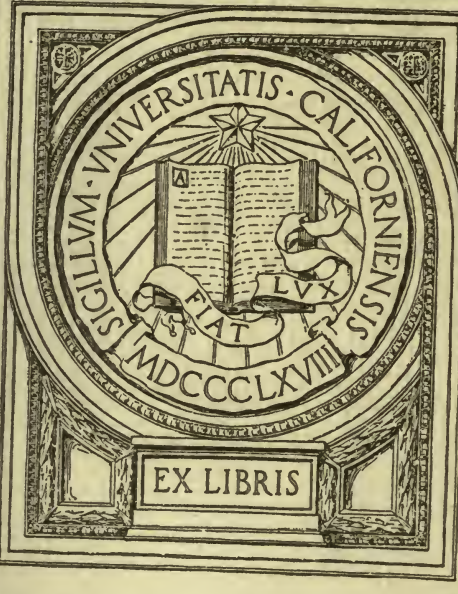
A TWENTIETH-CENTURY HERO

By

THE HON. GEORGINA O'BRIEN

GIFT OF
Gaelic League



961
C13
t

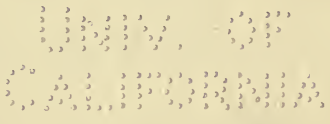
A TWENTIETH-CENTURY HERO

A TWENTIETH-CENTURY HERO

BY

THE HON. GEORGINA O'BRIEN

AUTHOR OF "THE HEART OF THE PEASANT"



MAUNSEL AND CO. LTD.
LONDON AND DUBLIN
1913

All Rights Reserved

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

TO
MY FATHER

292415

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/twentiethcentury00obririch

CONTENTS

PART I

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Early Days at the Farm	1
II.	Hetty has a Visitor	12
III.	A Nurse-Child	16
IV.	Bennie	20
V.	Dicky seeks his Fortune	26
VI.	The Approach of the Hop Harvest	29
VII.	Among the Hops	32
VIII.	A Rude Awakening	39
IX.	Weary and Foot-sore	43
X.	Miggens *chez lui*	50
XI.	Hetty goes into Service	55
XII.	Miggens appreciates Beauty	61
XIII.	Hetty visits Ivy Farm	69
XIV.	Adrift	72
XV.	Miggens reprimands Hetty	77
XVI.	Miggens Reveals Himself	84
XVII.	At Canterbury	92
XVIII.	A Visit to the Cathedral	99
XIX.	Emma	106
XX.	The July Sales	115

PART II

XXI.	Grace Verdale	129
XXII.	An Unknown Artist	135
XXIII.	Hetty's Future Discussed	142
XXIV.	The Flanagan *Menage*	149
XXV.	Mr. Dawlish	154

CHAP.		PAGE
XXVI.	*Une Belle Dame*	159
XXVII.	Hetty finds a Photograph	164
XXVIII.	Welcome Letters	168
XXIX.	A Lucullian Banquet	172
XXX.	Hetty's Picture	175
XXXI.	The Last Sitting	183
XXXII.	The Sistine Madonna	189
XXXIII.	An Immortal Day	196
XXXIV.	Slater Again	203
XXXV.	Day Dreams	208
XXXVI.	A Proposal	213
XXXVII.	Dawlish joins the Philistines	219
XXXVIII.	Grace visits the Studio	225
XXXIX.	An Exhibition of Paintings	229
XL.	An Unpleasant Meeting	232
XLI.	Hetty goes to Verminster	237
XLII.	Hetty enters upon New Duties	240
XLIII.	Hetty meets her Father	244
XLIV.	The Irony of Fate	252
XLV.	A Friend in Australia	259
XLVI.	The Saddest Part of History	265

PART III

XLVII.	A Warm Welcome	269
XLVIII.	Mr. Flanagan gets into Trouble	272
XLIX.	A Midnight Visitor	275
L.	Shocking News	283
LI.	The Trial	286
LII.	The Verdict	295
LIII.	A Twentieth-Century Hero	302

EPILOGUE 307

PART I

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS AT THE FARM

The heart that is soonest awake to the flowers
Is always the first to be touch'd by the thorns.

THOMAS MOORE

ALL the long July day the heat had been intense, and even at the approach of evening a haze, light as a gossamer veil, still hung over the land foretelling hot days to follow. In the meadow fields the cattle stood deep in buttercups and dog-daisies, they had ceased to browse, and, as they stared reproachfully down the dusty road, were flicking their tails lazily to ward off worrying gnats. It was past milking hour, and Hetty Marrington of Ivy Farm had not come to milk them.

For once Hetty was not punctual. The languorous atmosphere had disposed her to idle, and she found it pleasanter to swing to and fro, with slow rhythmical movements, on the gate of the neglected farm-house, than to trudge down the dusty road with a heavy pail upon her arm. The hush and fragrance of the summer evening had cast its spell upon the girl, whose eyes rested with dreamy content upon pleasant,

friendly Kent stretched smilingly around her. Just beyond the hop garden, to the left of the farm, was a red oast house on the roof of which a number of pigeons had noiselessly congregated, too lazy to coo. Opposite, separated from the road only by a low hedge, was an orchard, where the white heart cherries grew profusely—cherries which Hetty believed to be the largest and sweetest in all England.

From time to time she interrupted her swinging, to fan herself with a broad leaf of horse-chestnut, which admirably served her purpose. Undeniably beautiful was this slip of a girl, hardly more than a child, for she was not yet sixteen. The faded, shapeless, pink cotton gown she wore—the sleeves of which were rolled back above dimpled elbows—failed to conceal the graceful outline of her figure; her face was a perfect oval, and the bloom of youth and health was on her cheek. Dreamy blue eyes, set somewhat far apart, gave her an expression of singular innocence and candour; the sweep of her dark eyebrows was as clearly and delicately defined as is the curve of a butterfly's wing; her well-shaped lips indicated firmness of purpose; in her chin a dimple nestled, and her light hair curled over a calm, childlike brow. She made a pleasant picture, swinging on the gate, with the sun shining on her hair.

A cart passed by, driven by a man seated on a load of hay, whose features relaxed into a

smile as he saw Hetty, and wished her "good evening."

Then Mr. Miggens, a retired tradesman, passed on his way home. He had been to a meeting at a Nonconformist Chapel, and wore a tall hat, a frock coat, tan leather boots of mahogany hue, and looked very respectable and staid. He was acquainted with Hetty, from whom he had once bought a basket of mushrooms, and always stopped to speak to her. When he saw the girl at the gate, his pursed-up lips parted into a smile, and he wished her "good evening" in an unctuous voice, as if he were still addressing a meeting.

"My, my, what a tall girl you are growing," he said, "I see a change in you from week to week. Be a good girl, and keep the lads at a distance. Did you ever think of going into service?" he inquired. "No? Well, my dear, should you change your mind, remember Mr. Miggens."

Hetty thanked him and promised. Whereupon Mr. Miggens patted her cheek and, putting his hand into the recess of a capacious pocket, drew out a threepenny bit, at which he looked for some time, as if loath to part with it. Then, putting it into Hetty's hand, he said:

"Little bright eyes, here's something to buy bulls' eyes with, but don't eat too many sweeties lest they spoil your pretty teeth," and, having

wished her good night, he continued his homeward way.

Hetty watched the retreating figure with amusement, for his walk was most peculiar, half amble, half prance. She laughed as she watched him disappear at the bend of the road, and then wondered how it was that she could not like such a kind old man. "What an ungrateful girl I am, to be sure?" she thought. But Mr. Miggens was soon forgotten, the enjoyment of the beauty of that glorious summer day excluded every other thought. Bees were humming drowsily in the lime trees near her, the air thrilled with the song of birds, and although Ivy Farm itself was neglected, dilapidated, and overgrown with weeds, it was pleasant there that evening. The profuse July foliage lent a picturesqueness to everything, and like the cloak of charity, concealed a multitude of defects. The great horse-chestnut spread itself before broken and dingy windows; creepers nestled round the creaking and dilapidated doorway, and nettles and dandelions flaunted themselves audaciously on the walks. Near the gateway was a notice-board bearing the words, "Refreshments for Cyclists," but no cyclists ever came. The untidy farm-house did not suggest appetizing refreshments.

Presently the angry banging of a door roused Hetty from her reverie, and she trembled, as she saw a powerfully built woman, with an

abnormally short neck, and a face so glossy and red that it seemed to have been polished, coming towards her. It was her stepmother, Mrs. Marrington, wearing a dusty black bonnet adorned with spiky jet ornaments, which were shaking violently owing to the angry and excited condition of their wearer.

"I'll learn you, Lazy Bones," she screamed. "Haven't you milked the cows yet? Get your pail, you good-for-nothing and be off, or the milk will be late for the London market."

As she spoke she clenched a coarse, heavy hand, and endeavoured to strike Hetty, who skilfully evading the blow, seized her milk pail, and beat a hasty retreat down the road.

On reaching the meadow field Hetty found Dicky Bean, the farm hand, waiting for her with the milk cart and rheumatic pony.

"You're late," remarked Dicky laconically.

"I'm sorry, Dicky," said Hetty, "but the day was so lovely that it set me dreaming, and I clean forgot the milking."

"I guess if you did, Mrs. Marrington didn't," said Dicky significantly; "'ope you escaped a dressing," he added feelingly.

Dicky was an orphan, whom Mrs. Marrington had procured from the workhouse on the pretext of helping him to earn an honest living as yard-man and labourer. Dicky did the work of three men, and in return for his energy was the recipient of many cuffs and imprecations. Hetty

had always befriended him; they were drawn together by the misery of their common lot.

"Mrs. Marrington is a terrible 'un to give tongue," said Dicky, as he produced Hetty's three-legged stool from amongst the cans on the cart.

As she milked, he poured into her ears a scheme he had been planning, while the hungry pony, regardless of the unstable condition of its harness, browsed greedily by the roadside.

"I guess I'm pretty well sick of the job at the farm," said Dicky. "I'll run away to sea."

Hetty, who was lost in admiration at his enterprising spirit, could only gasp, "Oh, Dicky!"

Dicky, encouraged by her expression, unfolded his plan, which was to tramp to Liverpool. Once there he would stow himself on one of the great American liners, and not emerge from his hiding-place until the vessel was in mid ocean.

"Perhaps," said Hetty, "when you do show yourself, the sailors 'ud just throw you into the sea."

"Gals is silly," said Dicky contemptuously.

"I could work my passage out. The crew 'ud be glad of a willing boy to lend a 'and. Oh, 'tis just fine to see foreign lands with cocoanuts as big as your 'ead and bananas all growing from the trees," said Dicky, with a comprehensive

wave of his hand. "And on the coast," he continued, "there's corals and pearls deep under the shining waters. Maybe, I'll become a diver and find a big pearl. If I do so, I'll come 'ome and sell it, and then you can give the good-bye to Ivy Farm. I'll never forget you, Hetty," said Dicky magnanimously, and he continued to expatiate on the glory and danger of a life at sea. Like every other boy, this workhouse lad had his dreams—dreams of adventures in which he figured as a hero—visions of blue seas and tropical islands in which gold lay hidden, and which, in his dreams, he lways found.

Hetty interrupted his flow of eloquence to ask him had he any money with which to get to Liverpool.

"I told you I'd walk there," said Dicky undauntedly.

"But even so," said Hetty, "you must eat by the way, and one can't get food for nothing."

"I've saved a few coppers, that I got for odd jobs 'olding 'orses at the Maid of Kent," said Dicky.

When he had finished speaking, Hetty put her hand into her pocket, and drawing out the threepenny bit Mr. Miggens had given her, thrust it into Dicky's hand.

"Take it," she said, "you'll need it on the road," and she added plaintively, "Dicky, I shall miss you sore."

But Dicky reassured her by saying that some day he would return to England a rich man, and with his promise Hetty was fain to be content.

When the milking was finished, and the fresh warm milk had been poured into the cans in which there was a goodly amount of water, Dicky jumped on to the rumbling, creaking cart, and drove his rattling cans to Arbury Junction to catch the night train to London, where the milk was to be sold.

Ivy Farm was situated on the borders of Sussex and Kent, some miles from the small town of Arbury.

It had not always been so neglected and unprosperous, and Hetty could remember the time when it was bright, clean, and trim. Since her mother's death, eight years ago, the place had gone to rack and ruin. Her father, a man of weak character, had taken to drink, and three years before our story opens, had married a woman of violent temper and intemperate habits, who dominated him entirely. All day long the second Mrs. Marrington bickered, nagged, and scolded. At the sound of her stepmother's voice Hetty would tremble and her eyes fill with tears. Luke Marrington himself was afraid of his wife, and never attempted to shield his daughter from her anger. Things went from bad to worse at the farm. Fields which had once belonged to them had

been sold or let, and a few cows were all that now remained to them. The milk had to be sent to London daily, for as Luke Marrington had been fined more than once for selling adulterated milk, the neighbours would have no dealings with him.

As she went home, Hetty reflected sadly on their poverty and misery. She was industrious and hard-working, but of late had begun to find the drudgery of her life insupportable, for she received neither gratitude nor thanks. Wondering what fate awaited her on her arrival home, she lifted the latch of the farm-house door with a trembling hand. Her father was in his usual maudlin condition in front of the kitchen fire, while Mrs. Marrington was busy preparing tea.

"Lend a 'and 'ere," she said, as the girl made her appearance. For a moment she had forgotten her quarrel with Hetty, who removed three bottles of Bass's Pale Ale from the table and spread the cloth.

"Come, father," she said, "and have a cup of tea."

But Mr. Marrington was morose. He refused to eat, and barely touched his tea, saying that his appetite had failed him; he was miserable, he had neither health nor money, and didn't for the life of him know what was going to happen to them, and that he saw nothing before them but the "house."

Mrs. Marrington listened with contempt to her husband's lugubrious remarks, as she poured a spoonful of some mysterious liquor from a bottle into her tea, and thus regaled, became loquacious.

"You brought me to this pass. You never do a 'and's turn about the place. What was I thinkin' of when I married you?" she said turning her eyes up to the ceiling.

Luke Marrington had been copiously indulging in beer all the afternoon, and it had imparted to him a sort of spurious courage, which made him resent her observations.

"I'm thinking it was a case of the last rose of summer. Better late than never. Anyhow, you were precious glad to get me," he remarked doggedly.

At these words Mrs. Marrington flew into a paroxysm of rage, and gave vent to a torrent of abuse, as she clattered the cups and saucers. After a time, when her anger had spent itself, she and her husband became quite friendly again over a fresh bottle of beer, and she said, "I've been turning over in my mind for some time as to 'ow we could make a little money, and I've been thinking that it would be a good plan if we was to put an advertisement in the paper and offer to adopt a h'infant. Here, Hetty, get a pen and write the advertisement."

Mrs. Marrington dictated as follows:

"Lady hanxious to adopt h'infant—maternal

care—good country air—premium and small weekly sum necessary.—Apply to 'M.,' Ivy Dairy Farm."

"Now, Hetty," she said, "when Dicky comes in, just send him hoff to the 'Local Advertiser' with this 'ere advertisement."

CHAPTER II

HETTY HAS A VISITOR

Roses are her cheeks
And a rose her mouth.

TENNYSON,

VISITORS rarely found their way to Ivy Farm, but one evening, as Hetty was raking into some semblance of tidiness the neglected strip of gravel before the door, a shout of "Ho! Anyone there?" fell upon her ear. Wondering whence such a peremptory summons came, she looked up and saw a young man standing by the gate. He wore clips on his trousers, his boots were dusty, and beside him was a bicycle from which he had evidently dismounted.

"Were you calling?" asked Hetty as she approached him.

"Rather! I should just think I was," said the young man. "What's the meaning of this placard," he asked, pointing to the notice-board, "if a chap can't 'ave a drink?"

"Folks don't often come," said Hetty apologetically, "but I dare say I can get you something."

The man was mollified, he looked at her, and his expression softened.

"Thank you, Miss," he said. "I'm thirsty and I've got to get back to London. Seems like as if all the dust 'ad gone down my throat."

Hetty opened the gate and the stranger, having first placed his bicycle by the wall, followed her to an arbour, overgrown with creepers, built by Mr. Marrington in his more prosperous days, in order to add to the attractiveness of what was to have been the tea garden.

"Queer, dark sort of a place," said the cyclist, looking round him. "Romantic perhaps but not h'exactly cheerful. Many earwigs about?" he inquired.

To this remark Hetty replied by asking what he'd fancy to drink.

"Seems to me," he said, "it's a case of get what you can 'ave."

Hetty asked him if he would like a glass of nice warm milk just fresh from the cow, or a cup of tea.

"One don't often 'ave nice warm milk fresh from the cow in London," said the young man. "London cows milk blue."

He laughed so heartily at his own joke, that Hetty, too, could not help laughing. She thought him a very pleasant young man. He was tall, well made and well dressed, and looked like a young artizan, which, indeed, he was.

His features were fairly regular but his narrow eyes were very closely set. A heavy drooping moustache did not quite conceal a thick-lipped mouth.

Hetty went to fetch a glass of milk which was as yet untampered with by her stepmother. On her return she found the cyclist reading a comic paper, one of the columns of which contained a joke about mothers-in-law, which he considered very amusing and to which he called Hetty's attention. Seeing she was expected to laugh she did so, and wondered if the jest was too subtle for her to grasp, as it singularly failed to appeal to her sense of humour. The young man told her, as he sipped the milk, that his name was Sammy Slater, and that he was a journeyman locksmith, and had come down from London to repair the locks at an old cove's called Miggens, who lived beyond Arbury.

" It seems," said Mr. Slater, " that 'e's always 'avin' the locks changed, 'e's in terror of being robbed, 'e's a rich, close-fisted, old creature."

Then, changing the conversation, he inquired of Hetty if she had ever been to London. Hetty answered that she had spent a day there years ago, when very young. On hearing this, her new acquaintance proceeded to paint in glowing colours the many attractions of the Metropolis. Having finished his description, he consulted his watch, and exclaimed :

" It's about time I was off if I am to get to

London to-night. I 'ad no idea the time had slipped by so fast. 'ow much for the milk ? " he inquired.

" Two pence," answered Hetty.

He gave her a penny for herself, and as he did so, expressed a hope that duty and pleasure would combine to bring him to Ivy Farm again, where he could have a glass of milk, and a sight of Hetty's roses.

At this remark he stared so intently at Hetty that a blush flamed into her cheeks. Mr. Slater seemed amused, and proceeded to state that London was a queer place.

" There we live in a h'artificial age. That's wot it is my dear, when cows milk blue, and the London ladies buy their blushes at the perfumer's. Now I'm all for simplicity and nature, so I am."

Here he cast an admiring glance at Hetty, and taking off his hat with an elaborate sweeping movement, he flourished it in the air, saying the while :

" Au revoir, as the *parlez-vous* say."

Then this lover of nature and the simple life mounted his bicycle and was soon lost to sight, enveloped in a cloud of dust.

CHAPTER III

A NURSE-CHILD

La vie est une affaire brutale.
TURGENEV

HETTY stood by the gate watching the retreating bicycle. She had enjoyed the young man's visit, and being absolutely innocent and ignorant of life, would have been extremely surprised had she been told that he had wished her to perceive and be flattered by his admiration of her. At the farm her life had been a secluded one, and she rarely saw anyone about her own age except Dicky Bean. Her stepmother had always some ready excuse to prevent her attendance at school, and had it not been that her own mother had taught her to read and write, she would have grown up in complete ignorance.

As Hetty was standing, still thinking of her departed visitor, she suddenly became conscious that a pair of eyes were intently gazing at her from the other side of the road. Looking up she saw a young woman carrying a bundle, who on seeing that Hetty had observed her, crossed over and asked :

"Is this Ivy Farm?"

Hetty answered in the affirmative, and the young woman fumbled in her pocket, drew out a dirty, crumpled newspaper, and pointing to the advertisement Mrs. Marrington had inserted some weeks before said:

"I've come in reply to this."

Hetty then perceived that the bundle was a baby, carefully wrapped up in a shawl, and she suggested that the woman should see her step-mother. They went accordingly into the farm-house together. The woman was a delicate-looking young creature, wearing a frowsy fringe, a heavy locket was suspended from a chain round her neck, her dress was shabby, but her hat was garlanded with flowers and feathers. She wore black openwork thread gloves, her expression was not disagreeable, and in her dark soft eyes, which had a sad, appealing expression, there was a slight cast. She told Mrs. Marrington that her name was Sarah Fuller, and that she had been in service and had got into trouble. "And he left me to bear it all by myself," she said. "I had a hard struggle to live. But now things seem better and I have succeeded in getting another situation as housemaid at eighteen pounds a year, but of course I must put the child out to nurse, though it goes hard with me to part with him. He's a nice little baby," she said, unfolding the shawl to display a puny infant of about three months old.

Then she and Mrs. Marrington commenced to discuss business. The latter promised that the child would have every attention and care, fresh air and new milk, if she received at least eight pounds premium, and a weekly sum of two shillings. The young woman seemed staggered at the amount, she said she had saved five pounds by dint of the hardest work, and it was all she had in the world. Eventually Mrs. Marrington agreed to accept that sum, if the girl promised to send two pounds as soon as she was paid her wages, but she insisted on immediate payment of the five pounds. The woman produced a greasy note from her pocket, at the sight of which Mrs. Marrington's manner visibly thawed, and she suggested that her visitor should have some refreshment. A bottle of beer was opened, and Hetty was told to bring some cheese. Mrs. Marrington did ample justice to these light refreshments, which the young woman hardly tasted. She sat with her baby on her knee, while every now and then her eyes filled with tears.

"It's hard to leave Bennie," she said, "he's a nice little baby and great company. You'll be kind to him?" she added pleadingly, addressing Mrs. Marrington.

"I'll be a mother to 'im,' 'said Mrs. Marrington, who had nearly finished the bottle of beer. "No prince in the land shall be more 'appy or comfortable—'e'll 'ave his own nurse in Hetty there,

that girl has a 'eart, I can tell you; why she went into 'ysterics last year when Luke Marrington drowned the kittens." (She might have added the cat too.) "Too much 'eart," she continued, "is as bad as too little, as I said to Marrington when Hetty took on so." Then turning her attention to the business in hand, she said, "Make yourself easy my dear, about the child. 'E'll have every attention as long as the money's paid regular."

The woman seemed comforted. She rose and kissed Bennie, and having handed him to Mrs. Marrington, drew on her cotton gloves over hard-worked, red hands. The child, who had been asleep, seemed to become suddenly aware that the only friend he had in the world was leaving him, for he began to cry lustily. The mother put her hands to her ears as if to shut out the crying, and bidding Mrs. Marrington a hasty adieu, walked quickly down the garden path. Hetty, who felt sorry for her, followed her and overtook her at the gate.

"I thought," said Hetty shyly, "that I'd tell you that I'll do the best I can for the child.'

"God bless your kind heart," said the woman. Her poor sad face quivered convulsively, and a tear fell upon her locket and twinkled there. "May God reward you," she said, as she hurried away to catch the train to London.

CHAPTER IV

BENNIE

The noblest minds their virtue prove
By pity, sympathy, and love.

COWPER

WHEN the young woman had left her, Hetty stood, lost in thought. She had witnessed the parting of the mother from her child with inexpressible pain. The day was fast drawing to a close, the sun was setting gloriously amidst clouds of crimson fringed with gold. On a distant hill slope a windmill was perched, its gaunt outline silhouetted against the gorgeous sky, and the pungent scent of burning weeds rose from a neighbouring field. But Hetty was unconscious of her surroundings and, for her, the landscape was blurred. A feeling of intense melancholy permeated her whole being. For the first time in her young life she had awakened to the consciousness that most lives are sad, and her heart went out in fullest sympathy to suffering humanity. She was experiencing what the Germans have so aptly termed *Weltschmerz*—sorrow for the world's sorrow. Hitherto her mind had been engrossed

by the hardship and drudgery of her own lot, but now the knowledge of universal suffering was borne in upon her. The egotism, natural to all young people, was passing into altruism. Poor, humble, little Hetty could not have found expression for her thoughts. Such words as egotism and altruism would have been wholly incomprehensible to her, but nevertheless, she was experiencing what the most generous and noblest souls have felt. She was sharing in her own heart the anguish and sorrow of the mother, whom a cruel and inexorable fate had parted from her child.

The barking of a dog roused her from her melancholy reverie, and then the wail of an infant fell upon her ear. Hetty turned and went indoors, where she found Mrs. Marrington still sitting by the kitchen table with the child on her lap.

"My word," she exclaimed as she saw Hetty, "'ow the brat 'owls. 'Ere take it and see if you can get it quiet. Give it some barley water or a drop of buttermilk."

Hetty took the child from her stepmother, and rocked it tenderly in her arms until its cries had subsided. Then, without Mrs. Marrington's knowledge, she procured some milk which she warmed and gave to the baby. After the milk was consumed, and when the little creature presented a more peaceful and happy appearance, Hetty improvised a rattle with two spoons.

These jingled loudly, and Bennie smiled feebly at Hetty. His helplessness moved her to pity, and appealed to those tender sympathies hitherto latent in her nature. She had often wished for something or somebody to love, and had lavished an amount of affection on the cat which her father had so cruelly drowned. At one time she had made a pet of a wounded jackdaw, which she had found, and which she tended till it became quite tame, and would hop about and alight upon her shoulder, and peck affectionately at her cheek. But, alas! as is often the case with pets, poor Jack had come to an untimely end. Hetty had always felt the need of loving something or somebody, and was quite ready to love her father, but he was distinctly unresponsive. Now Bennie had come to claim her affection, and to increase her daily work. The child frequently kept her awake at night by crying. All the trouble of dressing and tending him, in addition to her household occupations, fell upon her too willing shoulders. Mrs. Marrington made no allowance for this additional work but railed at her more and more, saying that the adoption of the child into the household had augmented the expenses.

Hetty had the greatest difficulty in procuring sufficient nourishment for Bennie. On one occasion, Mrs. Marrington discovered that the milk pails did not hold their usual amount, and accused Hetty of having stolen the milk. In

her temper she had struck the girl, causing a bruise which was apparent on her face for weeks afterwards.

For a time Mrs. Marrington continued to receive regularly the weekly sum Sarah Fuller had agreed to pay for the maintenance of Benjamin. When he was about six months old, a parcel for him reached the farm containing some warm garments and a brilliant tartan pelisse, which Mrs. Marrington appropriated, saying that it was too smart for everyday wear, and that she would put it carefully aside until it was required. Hetty never saw it again, and Dicky assured her that he had caught sight of the garment in the window of a pawn-shop in Arbury.

Sarah Fuller wrote from time to time to inquire for the child, and sent him her fond love, but by degrees the letters grew rarer and rarer. One day she wrote that she was under notice to leave her situation, and was looking out for another place. This was the last that was ever heard of Sarah Fuller at Ivy Farm. In vain Hetty speculated concerning her. Had she gone under completely, or had she died ?

At the cessation of the weekly payment, Mrs. Marrington's anger knew no bounds. She repeatedly said that it would be a good job if the brat died, but notwithstanding her uncharitable wishes, the child prospered under Hetty's care, and grew stronger and infinitely

more attractive. Suddenly Mrs. Marrington's manner changed towards Benjamin, and she evinced a tender solicitude on his behalf, which astonished Hetty as much as it rejoiced her.

One day as she was in the yard feeding the poultry, Dicky Bean approached her and, laying a finger on his lip as if to impose silence, led her to the corner of the yard farthest from the house. Hetty had noticed that morning that Dicky had hovered near her as if anxious to tell her something of importance, but Mrs. Marrington had divined his intention and had successfully frustrated it. When Dicky had drawn Hetty well into the shadow of the hen coop he said :

" Hetty, you'd better be on the look out lest some misfortune 'appen to Benjamin, for she's a real bad 'un."

Dicky always alluded to Mrs. Marrington as " she."

Hetty looked bewildered and Dicky continued :

" Did you notice 'ow civil she's been for the last few weeks ? It doesn't seem sort o' natural. Why butter won't melt in her mouth, and a wolf is a wolf all the days of its life."

" What do you mean ? " gasped Hetty. " Surely she wouldn't harm the child ? She couldn't be that wicked."

" There's a lot of wickedness in the world," said Dicky. " I discovered that soon enough in the work'ouse."

Then, returning to the subject of Mrs. Marrington, he continued :

" The reason I 'ave for thinking she's brewing mischief is that I picked up a receipt from an insurance company, which she let fall. She 'as insured Bennie for £6. She looked sort of scared when I gave her back the receipt, and asked me if I 'ad read it. I daren't say that I 'ad."

Then seeing that Hetty looked miserably frightened, he said :

" You needn't worry. As long as the money's paid Bennie's safe enough."

Hetty's heart sank at these words, for she knew, though Dicky did not, that the weekly payment had ceased. She and Dicky entered into a compact to watch over Bennie with the utmost vigilance. However, as Mrs. Marrington returned to her normal manner, Hetty's suspicion gradually subsided, and she began to think that Dicky had been unduly alarmed.

CHAPTER V

DICKY SEEKS HIS FORTUNE

What ? Gone without a word ?
Ay, so true love should do :
It cannot speak. For truth
Hath better deeds than words to grace it.

SHAKESPEARE

ONE evening, as Hetty was enjoying a few moments of leisure in the ragged patch of garden attached to the farm-house, she was joined by Dicky Bean, who seemed silent and absent, and stood staring vacantly at some cabbage stalks. Hetty wondered vaguely what occupied his thoughts. She, herself, did not feel disposed for any conversational exertion. She had been churning all day and was tired. After a time, she turned to go indoors.

"Don't go in, Hetty," said Dicky, "bide a while and talk."

Hetty complied with his request, which was more earnestly made than the occasion seemed to warrant. Dicky remained silent, and reverted to his former melancholy mood. This time, however, he kept his eyes riveted on Hetty's face.

"You seem out of sorts, Dicky," said Hetty at length. "You aren't ill, are you?"

Dicky now assumed an unnatural cheerfulness of manner and said:

"Oh, no, not likely," and again lapsed into silence of some minutes' duration. When he spoke again it was in strange, tremulous tones, quite unlike his usual cheery accents.

"You and I 'ave always been good friends, Hetty," he said, "we 'ave shared a lot of work and trouble, but some day, perhaps, I may make a fortune and I'd share my luck with you."

At these words, so earnestly spoken, Hetty's heart sank, for she divined that Dicky intended to put his plans into execution and go to sea. He was sparing her the knowledge of his departure, lest she should get into trouble on his account.

"You wouldn't forget me even if we was to part?" asked Dicky, pleadingly.

"No, Dicky, never," said Hetty emphatically.

She was looking very pretty in the gathering dusk. Her recent exertions at the churn had left a lingering flush on her cheeks, and her eyes shone softly like the first pale stars in the evening sky.

Dicky had never analysed his feelings towards Hetty, but he felt, in a vague, boyish fashion, that he would like to kiss her. He wondered if he might ask her to kiss him and, if so, whether she would consent. But, just then, Mrs.

Marrington's voice was heard calling loudly on Dicky and Hetty, and the two turned indoors, having no time for further confidences.

Next day Dicky was gone. He had left in the small hours of the morning without any leave-taking. Hetty, though quite unconscious of his deep affection for her, missed him sadly. Her life grew more desolate and friendless. She had no one with whom to exchange a thought and, had it not been for Bennie, she, too, would have left the farm to seek her fortune elsewhere.

CHAPTER VI

THE APPROACH OF THE HOP HARVEST

> But the young, young children. Oh! my brothers
> They are weeping bitterly!
> They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
> In the country of the free.
>
> ELIZABETH BROWNING

AFTER one of the postman's rare visits to Ivy Farm, Mrs. Marrington looked up one day from a letter she had received, and said:

"'Ere's a letter from my brother John Edwards. 'E's terribly put to with the 'op 'arvest. Two of his best 'ands have gone and listed and he can't get 'oppers as the 'arvest has begun and all the 'ands are already working. Hetty," she continued, "John Edwards wishes to know if you'd go and 'elp in the 'op fields. You'd get paid by the pocket, so the more 'ops you pick the better. Now 'ere's your chance. You was always a-saying as 'ow you'd like to earn a bit on your own account."

Hetty remained silent. Somehow the chance did not appeal to her. She wondered if John Edwards resembled his sister in disposition. Mrs. Marrington was exasperated by Hetty's silence, and began scolding.

"Now, there you're always a-talking about earning your own bread and when the time comes when you could turn a honest penny you don't cotton to the notion."

"But who's to mind Bennie, if I go?" said Hetty. Then she added timidly, "Maybe I could take him with me. I have seen hoppers with children in arms. I could lay him in the field while I work."

Here Mr. Marrington angrily interposed with:

"What are you talking about, girl? No daughter of mine will be seen in the hop fields with a baby in arms. You must be mad to think of such a thing. In fact, I don't hold with this notion of hop-picking. It's low so it is," he declared emphatically.

Mrs. Marrington looked contemptuously at her spouse, and then said:

"Beggars can't be choosers, but your father's right about the child, Hetty. I'll look after 'im if you accept John Edwards' offer. I've grown to like Bennie. E's a good child enough."

Mrs. Marrington's tones had grown dulcet and friendly.

"I can't bear to think of leaving Bennie," said Hetty tearfully.

"You are not the only person in the world who can mind a baby," said Mrs. Marrington chaffingly. "The child will be quite safe until your return. John Edwards only wants you for

the 'op 'arvest, and the company you meet in his 'op garden would be most respectable; 'e only employs 'ome pickers, so that you would not meet any nasty low pickers from London."

Mrs. Marrington's statement in reference to the sole employment of home pickers was untrue, but of course Hetty did not know this. She was at last prevailed upon to give a reluctant consent. Her stepmother quite humbly received directions regarding Bennie. Hetty and she went through his scant wardrobe together, and Mrs. Marrington added thereto the gift of a warm, crossover shawl, which mark of kindness greatly pleased Hetty.

CHAPTER VII

AMONG THE HOPS

Kent, sir ?—everybody knows Kent—
Apples, cherries, hops, and women—

CHARLES DICKENS

AT dawn, a few mornings later, Hetty rose and, quietly making some clothes into a bundle, prepared to start on her journey to John Edwards' for the hop harvest. Before leaving the farm she bent over Bennie's cot and kissed the sleeping child very gently lest she might waken him. Then, with her bundle on her arm, she crept down the creaking stairs and was soon on her way to Arbury Station, where she was to catch the morning train.

It was a mellow September morning and the sun rose brilliantly, dispelling the few lingering wreaths of mist which still hovered caressingly over the land. A soft breeze blew the loosening thistle-down. Birds awoke to life and began to pipe, and the leaves shivered no longer under their burden of glistening dew. Despite her anxiety on Bennie's account, Hetty enjoyed her walk in the fresh morning air. It was a respite from her daily toil. When she reached the

station, the train had not yet been signalled and she had some time to wait.

It was a homely, old-fashioned station, with the station-master's house in close proximity to the platform. In the garden, which encircled the house, was a gnarled apple tree, under which was a quaintly shaped straw bee-hive. There were hollyhocks and sun-flowers too, which rose high and stiff, and which Hetty mentally compared to sentries on guard. The station-master was evidently an ardent horticulturist, for even alongside the platform ran a long strip of bed, gay with flowering shrubs. Hetty had time for observation as it was early; in fact the ticket office was not yet open. After some time she rapped timidly at its sliding window, which was raised noisily by a sleepy, blotchy-faced youth with a pencil behind his ear. Shyly she asked for a third-class ticket.

"Single or return?" snapped the youth.

"Return," said Hetty, thinking of Bennie and determining to get home to him as soon as possible. Having secured her ticket, she returned to the platform to await the train, which, after a time, rumbled into the station.

Hetty took her place in the special hop-picking train, which had come from the Metropolis, and was packed with hoppers. She had in her compartment a whole family migrating

from the East End to the hop gardens. There was an old grandmother evidently too feeble to be left at home, a coster and his wife, and several children, with whom Hetty made friends. Their mother told her that she took them hopping every year, it was so wholesome and gave them such a nice "houting."

After a time the children, tired from their early start and unwonted excitement, fell asleep, and Hetty sat quietly at the windows contemplating the flying distances. It was practically her first journey: and how delightful and wonderful it was! The train rushed through the Kentish country, passing meadows, fields, and chalk-pits. Now a stream, bordered by stunted pollard willows, meandered by, and then the great hop gardens of East Kent revealed themselves to Hetty's eyes. Some of the graceful plants twined themselves round the poles, but many of them had already been cut down and lay about. The gardens were full of workers. The women's gowns and sun-bonnets, and the crimson spotted handkerchiefs they wore over their heads, gave a pleasant touch of colour to the scene.

Hetty would have enjoyed the travelling very much had it not been for her intense shyness, which almost made her ill. When the railway journey was over, she, in company with some other pickers, made her way to John Edwards' hop garden. Her employer was a surly-

looking man, bearing a striking resemblance to his sister, Mrs. Marrington. The new-comers were put to work without delay in the hop garden, which was thronged with cheery, garrulous pickers. It seemed to Hetty that she was surrounded by a swarm of industrious, buzzing bees, and she picked in silence, too shy to speak. She was alarmed by the rough manners and loud voices of the pickers, who, intent on their work, took but scant notice of her. The jokes and conversation around here were sometimes broad and coarse, but Hetty's shyness helped to preserve her innocence. She was too timid to form any friendships.

In the evenings the pickers piled sticks and weeds together and lit fires at which to cook their evening meal. They clustered round the flames with pewter tins and mugs, and the firelight, casting its ruddy glow upon the workers, made them resemble, when seen from afar, some gipsy encampment, or a picture of low life by one of the great Dutch masters. Food had never seemed so good to Hetty as these scrappy meals, eaten in the open air, amidst the thousand delicious scents of a summer evening, mingled with the odour of burning weeds. Then, when the moon shone out low over the earth, casting its magic sheen on everything, some of the costers sang or danced. One woman in particular gave a remarkable performance. She

went by the name of Liza, and wore a velvet skirt and a loose blouse which in no way cramped her figure. With her hands upon her hips, she danced with amazing agility. When one of the company whistled a tune she stepped and twirled with great swiftness and dexterity, her coster hat weighed down with feathers and her long, brass ear-rings swaying with the rhythmical movements of her body. Great was the applause and many the appreciative comments which she elicited from the delighted onlookers. They would call out, "Well done, Liza. You'd make your fortune at the 'alls. Why Mord Allen isn't in it." On these occasions the performer was always presented with a large glass of beer. She was a good-natured, jolly creature, and had taken a fancy to Hetty, to whom she had more than once proffered the foaming mug saying, "'Ave a drink, dearie. It's good stuff and 'elps one along the 'ard road of life." "No?" she would echo. "Well, perhaps you're wise. 'Ere's to your very good 'ealth, dear," and she would consume the beer at one draught. Liza was a strange, complex creature, much given to philosophic utterances.

"It's better to dance through life than to cry through it," she once said to Hetty—"though sometimes it's a deal 'arder. Life is ugly and we 'ave got to deceive ourselves a lot to get through it any way comfortable. We must keep our eyes shut and be a bit blind. It don't

do to see things as they are. To keep up one's own 'eart and those of others is a dooty which we owe to life, and it takes a bit of doing to do it—a lot of courage, so it does."

Hetty sometimes wondered what manner of life this strange creature had led, but, be that as it might, Liza respected Hetty's innocence, and would often check rough oaths or a coarse word in her presence. Hetty liked her for her kindness, and might have been more responsive had she not been obsessed with a desire to return to Bennie as soon as possible. Often of an evening she would steal away from the hop-pickers and sit concealed in an avenue of gold and green hops, her young face upturned to the stars, which were showing slowly, one by one, in the sky, and dream of those few souls she loved—her lost mother, who had cautioned her against the evils of beer, and had bade her lead a good life, and never lose her self-respect—kind Dicky Bean, and little Bennie. She constantly wondered how the child was faring under her stepmother's care, and if she would ever get back to him. But the fates seemed to have conspired against her, for, the very day on which she was free to return home, her foot caught in a rut, causing her to fall heavily to the ground, the result being severe bruises and a sprained ankle. She had to be removed to the local Infirmary for treatment, where she was detained for over a week. At last she was

discharged, feeling very weak, with her earnings safe in her pocket, and great happiness in her heart at the prospect of seeing Bennie again.

CHAPTER VIII

A RUDE AWAKENING

Oh! Fairest Flower, no sooner blown but blasted.
MILTON

WHEN Hetty reached home, she found her stepmother standing motionless, just inside the gate, rake in hand, but she did not seem to have been raking, as the gravel bore no such signs. There was something expectant about Mrs. Marrington's attitude, which suggested that she was waiting for somebody. She greeted Hetty in a surprisingly friendly manner, and made many inquiries concerning John Edwards and the hop harvest. Nevertheless, her nonchalance of manner seemed assumed, and she avoided meeting Hetty's eyes, to whom the thought occurred that her stepmother lacked the courage to approach some subject upon which she wanted to speak. She was very voluble and talked so rapidly that it was some time before Hetty had an opportunity of inquiring where Bennie was. Before answering, Mrs. Marrington placed her rake with deliberation against the trunk of a tree, her usually purple complexion had become streaked and mottled, and her voice, generally

so raucous, was soft and wheedling. Shaking her head with an impressive slowness, she said solemnly, "Bennie's took."

"What do you mean?" demanded Hetty, who was trembling visibly.

Mrs. Marrington drew a deep sigh and continued to shake her head with gloomy significance. Then she said:

"Dead and buried, poor lamb. He sickened last week and passed away quiet like. I 'ad grown fond of him and was real sorry."

Hetty's blood turned cold. In faint tones she falteringly inquired the cause of the child's death. Mrs. Marrington cleared her throat with a prefatory cough, and spoke so dramatically, and with so much fluency, that the thought occurred to Hetty that her stepmother had anticipated the question and had rehearsed her answer.

"The poor dear got a bit of a cold on 'is lungs, and as 'e never 'ad much of a constitution, 'e was carried off surprising quick."

Hetty silently contemplated her stepmother for a moment in horror, then she exclaimed:

"Murderer!"

The word rang out on the quiet evening air.

"You have starved him, or worse!"

Mrs. Marrington could only gasp:

"Don't take on so, you're upset, that's wot it is."

Like most bullies, she was a coward, and

actually cowed before the angry girl whose indignation had swept away all timidity.

But Hetty turned on her fiercely and threatened her with the police.

"I'll inform the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. I'll be no party to murder, so there!"

Mrs. Marrington, who was really alarmed, stammered something about having obtained a doctor's certificate.

"I dare say you managed to deceive the doctor so that he gave you a certificate. However that may be, I'll be bound you have the money on the insurance policy safe in your pocket. But I'll expose you," menaced Hetty.

Mrs. Marrington whimpered.

"You don't understand the terrible things you're saying. Bennie died quite natural."

Hetty cast one long look of contemptuous abhorrence at the vile woman and, no longer able to bear her presence, rushed upstairs. Mrs. Marrington followed. Hetty went into her room and slammed the door. Her stepmother quietly locked it, and noiselessly abstracted the key from the lock.

"There's no knowing what she'd do, she's that excited, she'd bring the police on us," she said to herself, as she went downstairs.

Hetty suddenly became aware that she was locked in her room, and shook the door violently in impotent anger. Mrs. Marrington's wicked

deed had been so dastardly, so hideous, so cruelly inhuman, that it called forth all the indignation of which the girl was capable. Again and again, in a paroxysm of anger, she hurled herself against the door, but it withstood her repeated assaults. At last she recognized the futility of her efforts and desisted. Her hands were hurting her from the violence of the blows which she had showered on the door. Tired out by her unavailing exertions, she stood and gazed round the familiar room; her eyes fell upon Bennie's empty cot placed near her bed, and then the tears came with a rush, and she gave way to an hysterical outburst of weeping. Throwing herself on her knees by her narrow bed, she buried her throbbing head in the shabby patchwork coverlet and wept her heart out. The long-drawn sobs reached the kitchen where Mrs Marrington was.

"She'll be easier now," she said. "Crying 'ill do her good. My word, won't I give 'er a talking to to-morrow. It's well Luke's out. 'Eaven knows what she'd put into 'is head, and 'e's quite capable of doing anything if 'e guessed the truth. Wot a fuss all about a nameless brat, who's better out of the world than in it. It's obliged to me they ought to be for one mouth the less to feed. How squeamish they are to be sure!"

So saying she rattled the pots and pans about.

CHAPTER IX

WEARY AND FOOT-SORE

> The beating of my own heart
> Was all the sound I heard.
>
> MONCKTON MILNE

AFTER a time Hetty fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. When she awoke it was to find the moonlight flooding the room, and the house quite still. A clock rang out the hour of midnight. The girl was hungry, weak, and quite unstrung. Her eyes kept wandering to Bennie's cot, and her excited imagination pictured the dead child's head against the pillow, the face pale and wan in the moonlight. She could even fancy she heard a long wailing cry. She buried her head once more in the coverlet and shuddered, going over in her mind all that had passed recently between herself and her stepmother, and realizing now that it was too late, that Mrs. Marrington had plotted to get her away in order to put her evil designs into execution. She, the child's only protector, had been sent to John Edwards, while her stepmother carried out her cruel intention. Had she accomplished her horrible purpose by gradual starvation, or by actual violence, were questions Hetty dared

not ask herself. But one thing grew clear to her in the silent night, and that was that she must escape from Ivy Farm. She could never again endure her stepmother's presence.

"How miserable I am," thought Hetty; "was ever any poor girl so cruelly circumstanced? Where am I to turn? I am so friendless, so absolutely alone."

She asked herself, Should she go to the police and expose her stepmother?

If so, her own father might be implicated in her stepmother's crime. What a disgrace! And, after all, if Mrs. Marrington was tried for murder, it would in no wise avail poor Bennie. Hetty's hands were tied, but she was determined never to spend another night under the same roof as her stepmother. Then a sudden thought flashed through her brain. Why not leave while the household still slept? There would be no one about to prevent her departure. She rose from her crouching position by the bed and went to the door; it was still locked. She went to the narrow window, and drawing aside the rusty bolt, raised it. She could just squeeze through, she thought. There was a drop of about four feet. She could cling to the thick-stemmed ivy, which climbed round her window, and let herself down. This feat accomplished, she would be free. Even so, what then? Where was she to go? In her perplexity, she remembered Mr. Miggens, who had asked her if she

wished to go into service, and if so to remember him. She resolved to remind him of his promise. He would most likely employ her, for he had always seemed kind. Having formed this resolution she listened intently in order to make sure that no one was stirring. A profound silence reigned.

Mr. Miggens lived beyond Arbury, and she must get there before morning. She found a candle end and lighted it, preparatory to packing her few things. In the corner of the room was an old trunk which had been her mother's. Hetty looked over its meagre contents and made a selection of a few necessary articles, and a valueless locket, which she had always managed to keep. To her it was precious, as it contained a photograph of her mother, gay in bridal array. What a sweet, kind face she had, and what natural refinement she possessed! Hetty recalled her gentle, quiet ways, and sweet, low voice, which she herself had inherited; indeed she spoke surprisingly well for a girl in her station of life. Her mother had been maid to an old lady, who had treated her more as a companion and friend than as a servant. Hetty looked sadly at her mother's picture and hoped she was spared the knowledge of her child's hard lot. If she had foreseen that her daughter would have to work in the hop fields, how miserable such knowledge would have made her. Hetty's religious education had been almost

nil. Her own mother had taught her some prayers which she said as best she could. But that was a long time ago.

In turning over the contents of the trunk, she found a photograph of her father, taken many years ago. How tidy and respectable he looked in his Sunday clothes! Alas! How rapid is moral degradation! It seemed incredible that the sturdy young countryman of the photograph could be the nerveless, drunken weakling, now entirely dominated by his second wife. Nevertheless Hetty thought she would keep the picture, for her mother had once loved him, so she put it into the parcel. Having tied the bundle securely with a piece of string she threw it from the window, and then scrambled out herself, clinging to the ivy and creepers. She was much scratched and torn, but sustained no injury save a slightly sprained ankle. Walking on tiptoe, lest her footsteps should be heard, she turned out of the gate and went along the road which lay through the heath. She felt faint, but after a time the fresh air revived her.

All nature was asleep. A cow started on hearing her footsteps, and gazed at her with drowsy eyes. She passed a great building whose white gables gleamed in the moonlight. Hetty knew it was an Augustinian Monastery. She could see lights in the chapel. The monks were keeping their vigils by the altar. She walked on, leaving the heath behind her, and found

herself on the Arbury road. Up to that moment she had not met anyone, but now she saw a wild-looking man, evidently a tramp, approaching her. He was muttering angrily to himself, and Hetty was frightened by the man's rolling gait and wild appearance. She looked round for some loophole of escape. The man suddenly became aware of her presence, and, giving a loud, meaningless laugh, quickened his pace. Hetty, now thoroughly alarmed, examined her surroundings, and espying an arch under the railway embankment, darted beneath its charitable shelter. The man, too drunk to follow her, or to see where she had hidden herself, muttered some inarticulate curse and passed on his way. The terrified girl stood with a wildly beating heart under the archway. How dark it was! She could hear the faint trickle of water oozing from the slimy walls. The moon had disappeared; it was the darkest moment of the night, the hour just before dawn.

It was a long time before she had courage to emerge from her hiding-place, and, when she did so, a cock was crowing lustily in some distant farmyard, heralding the first bright streaks of dawn in the sky. Having groped her way from under the archway, she walked on slowly. Her recently sprained ankle was paining her, and it now struck her for the first time that she could not present herself at the Fuchsias, the abode of Mr. Miggens, in the small hours of the morn-

ing. She decided to conceal herself in his garden until the hour came in which she might apply for work. Accordingly she walked on to Arbury, which she reached about five o'clock.

The little country town was asleep, not a soul was stirring. She went through the main street, the cobble stones echoing her footsteps. The Fuchsias lay a mile beyond the town, but she dragged herself on painfully. The whole countryside was soon awake. Birds pecked at the hawberries along the hedgerows. A milk-cart rumbled along, the driver looking with curiosity at the limping girl. Hetty was disconcerted at first, but was much relieved when she found he was a stranger to her.

When she at last came in sight of the Fuchsias, she sat down on a heap of stones on the roadside until she saw some labourers going to work in the fields, a sure indication that another day's toil had begun. Then she rose and entered the gateway of the Fuchsias. The house was surrounded by about three acres of ground. A neatly gravelled path, flanked by flower beds, led to a portico, which was approached by a flight of steps, carefully pipe-clayed. The hall door had innumerable brass handles and knobs, all polished and glittering in the morning sun. Hetty thought the Fuchsias a very fine place indeed, and was much impressed by its air of prosperity. The house was two stories high, and on one side of the portico was the drawing-

room and on the other the parlour, each being adorned with a bow window. The drawing-room window was carefully screened by a bead blind, but the sun poured its bright rays into the unscreened parlour windows to reveal a round table, arrayed in a plush cloth of that peculiarly nauseating hue, dear to the heart of upholsterers, and designated by them "old gold." On the table was a handsome cage, containing a gorgeous parrot. Hetty, quite overwhelmed by so much magnificence, could hardly summon courage to ring the bell. Eventually she timidly did so, and stood waiting with a beating heart.

CHAPTER X

MIGGENS *CHEZ LUI*

Our charity begins at home,
And mostly ends where it begins.

HORACE SMITH

MR. AND MRS. MIGGENS were seated at breakfast in the parlour. Mrs. Miggens had unlocked a small, old-fashioned rosewood tea caddy ornamented with a mother-of-pearl plate bearing the inscription "From Joshua to Maria." Having carefully measured out the two spoonfuls of tea, she placed them in the pot and poured water on them. As she waited for the tea to draw she gazed complacently at the caddy, which had been a gift from Mr. Miggens in the early years of their married life. Mrs. Miggens, if ineffectual looking, was of placid and comfortable aspect. The expression of her eyes, which was somewhat bovine, had caused some wag to say of her that she reminded one forcibly of a cow which, whilst browsing in a meadow, had suddenly been startled into mild surprise by a passing train. Upon her smooth "front" she wore one of those hideous mob caps, which the untravelled foreigners believe all British matrons affect, even those of the "smart set."

Mr. Miggens was reading an account in the *Arbury Chronicle* of a missionary address, delivered at a meeting in the town hall, at which he had presided. He looked up from his paper to inquire if the tea were brewed.

"It will be quite ready in a few minutes, Joshua," said his wife. "Any news?" she inquired. "Does the paper give a description of the gown worn by the Queen at the christening of the battleship *Resolute?*"

Mr. Miggens ignored the question and remarked that the feminine heart was always set on fal-lals.

Here the parrot saucily interposed with "Fi donc! Cross patch." The bird had been bought from a French sailor at Marseilles by Mrs. Miggens' son, a *mauvais sujet*, long since dead. Mrs. Miggens had been deeply attached to her unsatisfactory offspring, and, on this account, treasured the garrulous bird, whose conversation was a jumble of English and French—sometimes profane.

"That parrot's a positive nuisance," said Mr. Miggens with asperity. But Mrs. Miggens had not heard her Joshua, she had surreptitiously possessed herself of that portion of the *Arbury Chronicle* which contained an account of the christening of H.M.S. *Resolute*, and was eagerly perusing the description of that important function.

"It does seem a pity," she murmured, "to

waste such expensive liquor as a bottle of champagne on the naming of a vessel, when a temperance drink would do as well. Perhaps, after all, the sailors put lime-juice cordial or raspberry vinegar into an empty champagne bottle," she said speculatively.

"Maria," said Mr. Miggens sternly, interrupting the thin trickle of her conversation, "My tea."

At that moment, the parrot called out, "Wake up, Mary, make the tea, a cup for you and a cup for me."

"Polly, you are a wonderful bird," said Mrs. Miggens fondly, as she handed her husband his cup.

She herself had taught Polly the song as being more suited for English ears than the divers foreign oaths in which he was wont to indulge.

"Wake up, Mary," screamed the parrot. Then he broke off abruptly, and looking towards the windows ruffled his plumage angrily. Mrs. Miggens followed the direction of the bird's blinking eyes, and saw a young woman slowly coming up the walk.

"There's a stranger on the gravel sweep."

"Doubtless some one on the look out for charity," said Mr. Miggens, helping himself to the most tempting slice of bacon from the dish before him. "How often, Maria," he continued, "have I not warned you against the evil of indiscriminate alms-giving. Why, only yesterday

you gave an idle loafer a penny; I'm sure the fellow spent it at the Arbury Arms. When will you learn discretion? By giving that penny away you were guilty of a profoundly immoral act."

"The man had a racking cough," said Mrs. Miggens apologetically.

"Fudge," said Mr. Miggens crossly, "more tea."

At that moment there came a timid ring at the hall bell.

"The audacity of these beggars," exclaimed Mr. Miggens; "I don't know what the country is coming to when they ring at one's front door."

"I don't think the girl looks like a beggar," said Mrs. Miggens. "She seems foot-sore and has probably walked a long way," she continued peevishly. "I wonder why that girl, Bessie, does not answer the bell. She has no head on her shoulders since she has fallen in love."

"All your fault for countenancing followers," snapped Mr. Miggens.

There came another timid ring of the bell, this time followed by the noise of Bessie's creaking footsteps. The door was opened and a low, timid voice was heard addressing Bessie, who answered loudly:

"True enough, they do want a servant here, but do you think they'd take a tramp like you?"

The soft voice said something pleadingly, and Mr. Miggens caught the name Hetty Marrington.

He rose and went into the hall, just in time to find Hetty had fainted.

"Maria, Maria!" screamed Mr. Miggens excitedly.

Mrs. Miggens was hard of hearing, and this infirmity caused her to think that her husband's summons was a command to keep his tea hot, and she piped in a thin treble.

"Yes, dear, yes, I have placed the saucer over your cup."

But Mr. Miggens roared "Maria!" once more so vigorously that Mrs. Miggens rose from her seat and went so quickly into the hall that she almost slipped on the shining tarpaulin.

"It's Hetty Marrington from Ivy Farm," said Mr. Miggens, "she has just fainted."

Mrs. Miggens did not wait to hear more but rushed to the sideboard in the parlour, poured out some brandy, and, returning to the unconscious Hetty, poured it down her throat.

"Loosen her bodice," said the old lady kindly to Bessie.

CHAPTER XI

HETTY GOES INTO SERVICE

But in the way of a bargain, mark you me,
I'll cavil on the ninth part of a hair.

SHAKESPEARE

WHEN Hetty awoke to consciousness, she found herself lying on a comfortable sofa. She tried to rise, but Mrs. Miggens, who was leaning over her, bade her be still and gave her some brandy to revive her. Mr. Miggens, who had disappeared for a second into the parlour to lock up the brandy bottle in the cupboard, now rejoined his wife. He was of a suspicious and economical turn of mind, and having noticed that, in moments of excitement or confusion, Tom, the boy who cleaned the boots and helped in the garden, took advantage of the reigning confusion to pilfer, he took the precaution to lock up anything which might cause the boy to lapse from the path of honesty. Having carefully attached the key of the cupboard to the heavy chain which dangled across his silk cloth waistcoat, he said :

"Deary me ! Hetty Marrington ? Whatever brings you here, child ? "

Hetty told him that she could no longer remain at home, and reminded him that he had bade her apply to him, should she desire to go into service. Mr. Miggens saw the possibility of securing a good servant at a small cost, but he was cautious, and felt it incumbent on him to take up a safe position. Hetty was under age, her father could claim her at any moment; furthermore, he might say she had been enticed from home, and legal complications might arise. Having reflected on these possibilities, Mr. Mggensi spoke cautiously, weighing his words.

"Well, well, Hetty, I know you are a good girl, and I would like to put you in the way of earning your bread. We do require a servant, yet were I to engage you it would be on the understanding that, if your parents insist, you must return to them. Remember you have come here of your own free will. No inducement of any sort was held out to you. If you enter my service let there be no misapprehension as to this."

Hetty said she perfectly understood, and that it was probable that her stepmother would not trouble to find her, as they had parted on bad terms, and she added that, if Mr. and Mrs. Miggens saw fit to engage her she would be very grateful. Mrs. Miggens remarked that she feared Hetty had had little experience.

"You would endeavour to give satisfaction and perform your duties, Hetty?" inquired

Mr. Miggens. "Yes, that's right," he continued. "We must all do our duty. Each and all of us have tasks to perform from the highest in the land to the lowest. True happiness lies in the sincere performance of our duty."

But Hetty was unable to acquiesce in this platitude as she threatened to faint again.

"The child is tired and weak," said Mrs. Miggens. "I shouldn't be surprised if she were hungry too. Have you had any breakfast, girl?"

As Hetty answered in the negative, Mrs. Miggens bade Bessie, who was hovering near, listening to the conversation, bring Hetty to the kitchen and give her a cup of hot tea.

"I'll see you later on," said the old lady, addressing the tired girl, "but at present you're not fit to talk."

Bessie proved a bouncing good-natured young woman, who, seeing that Hetty was tired, seated her by the fire and brought her a cup of tea and a liberal helping of bread and butter. She was of an inquisitive nature and bombarded Hetty with questions. On hearing that she had a stepmother on whose account she had left home, Bessie grew very sympathetic and said:

"I, too, left home for the same reason."

Bessie was naturally loquacious, and much enjoyed the sound of her own voice, so that Hetty was soon in possession of all particulars concerning Mr. and Mrs. Miggens.

"This is my first situation, and I'm leaving next month because I'm going to be married," said Bessie; "I've been here now nearly two years, and although I shall better myself by my marriage, I'm sorry to leave missis, who is kind, if a bit fussy and fidgety, but master is given to cheeseparing and don't allow no waste. It is said he is very rich and therefore the townspeople think a lot of him. He preaches in the Iron Tabernacle up the road. Last Sunday evening he gave an account of his 'heavenly election,' which made a great stir amongst the chapel folk. Not that I heard it myself, I was busy all the morning in the kitchen, and though master said I might go to the chapel in the evening, I went out for a turn instead, for I felt I wanted a breath of fresh air."

Hetty was not listening to Bessie's monologue, the exhausted girl's eyes were closing. The fire had made her drowsy and Bessie's voice was growing strangely remote. Having noticed this, Bessie suggested that she should lie down, of which offer she gladly availed herself. Bessie helped her to take off her boots and was horrified to find her ankle so swollen. She fetched some hot water, and having helped her to bathe her feet, left her refreshed and comfortable. A few minutes later, she was sleeping soundly on Bessie's bed.

Later on that day, when Hetty was sitting by the kitchen table helping Bessie to peel

potatoes, Mrs. Miggens came to the kitchen to interview her, and expressed a hope that she was quite well again.

"Yes, ma'am, thanks," replied Hetty, who was feeling very shy and lost behind one of Bessie's capacious aprons.

"Have you a good constitution, girl?" inquired Mrs. Miggens.

"Yes, ma'am, thanks," repeated Hetty.

"Well, you ought to have," remarked the old lady, "unless those rosy cheeks belie you."

Hetty said that, except for having sprained her ankle, she had never had anything the matter with her. Apparently satisfied with this assurance, Mrs. Miggens entered into business negotiations with her, with the result that she engaged her as general servant, at wages which, though low, seemed very liberal to the unsophisticated girl. Bessie promised to initiate her into the rules and ways of the Fuchsias, and Mrs. Miggens, after some further conversation as to her duties, said:

"And now what about caps, aprons and print frocks?"

Alas! Hetty possessed none of these requisites. Mrs. Miggens offered to pay her a small sum in advance with which she could buy some clothes. Furthermore, she said she would help Hetty to cut out the frocks, for which offer the girl was very grateful. Bessie took her under her wing and taught her many useful

things. They were happy, laughing and chattering over their work, and it was a real grief to Hetty when Bessie left to be married. She missed her cheery face, her loud yet kindly laugh, and the creaking sound of her footsteps. The two girls parted with many promises of seeing each other again. Promises which were fated never to be fulfilled, as Bessie shortly afterwards went to Scotland, where her husband had procured a situation.

CHAPTER XII

MIGGENS APPRECIATES BEAUTY

Hark ye, Clinker, you are a most notorious offender, you stand convicted of sickness, hunger, wretchedness, and want.

SMOLLETT

HETTY'S life at the Fuchsias, though somewhat monotonous, was happy enough. If Mrs. Miggens was fussy, and sometimes gave unnecessary scoldings, she was kind in the main and considerate where the girl was concerned. Not so, however, Mr. Miggens. He sent Hetty upstairs many times in the day on endless errands. "My! My! Hetty," he would say, "I have left my comforter upstairs," or "my umbrella," or whatever he happened to require at the time. "Run up and fetch it. Your fairy feet can get about more swiftly than my gouty ones." And Hetty, grateful for any little kindness, was only too willing to please her employers and never thought of grumbling. Mrs. Miggens often gave Hetty some dainties which remained over from dinner, saying that she knew young people liked sweets, but she did not deem it necessary to apprise her husband of these gifts lest he should consider her extravagant. Mrs Miggens was skilled in the

culinary arts, and under her supervision Hetty became an efficient cook. In every way the girl gave her employers satisfaction, and though she had a good deal to do, she was not overworked. There was a nice kitchen garden at the Fuchsias. In the spring it was a trysting place for birds, and Hetty grew to love all its feathered inmates. The thievish, roguish blackbirds, which bugled so merrily, the dear little chaffinches, with their pretty blue caps and gay plumage. The audacious bullfinches that came close to her, and putting their tiny heads coquettishly on one side, whistled and piped so melodiously for her benefit, the speckled thrushes, and the sparrows that hopped quite near the kitchen windows. When she felt dejected and apprehensive as to what unknown evils might await her in the future, she looked out of the window at the birds pecking at the ground in hopes of finding nutriment, while they twittered gaily, all unmindful of the morrow. It was from these feathered denizens of the gardens that she learnt her lesson in courage and in faith.

Hetty's special friend was a robin which sang bravely to her during the winter. It was quite tame, and if the kitchen window happened to be open would fly in, and sometimes, it must be confessed, alight on the meat or bread and peck at it. Mr. Miggens once saw it pecking at a loaf and was much disgusted. He considered birds "dirty," and had no love for

animals. Mrs. Miggens confided to Hetty one day, when helping her to make a print frock, that Mr. Miggens was really very unreasonable regarding the parrot.

"He is constantly threatening to get rid of the bird," said the old lady, with tears in her patient eyes, "and I could not bear to part with it as it belonged to my dear, dead son, to whom sometimes I think Mr. Miggens showed little forbearance. Young people will be young people, and they all sow their wild oats."

At these words Mrs. Miggens wiped away a tear which had trickled down her cheek. Hetty offered to keep the bird downstairs and take great care of it. The offer was gladly accepted, and the parrot was relegated to a corner of the kitchen, where it kept Hetty company and amused her with its chatter. The bird soon evinced an affection for the girl, and this advanced her further in Mrs. Miggens' good graces. Mr. Miggens also seemed pleased with Hetty, and one day as she was clearing away the plates after dinner, he said :

"Well, Hetty, I'm glad to perceive that you are doing your work conscientiously." Then he exclaimed rapturously, "Oh, the blessedness of work, Hetty ! How grateful we ought to be for our appointed tasks, which keep us happy and busy, and furthermore, give greater pleasure to our leisure moments. Hetty," he continued in the same strain, "how grateful you should

be! My! My! You are a lucky girl. Two new print gowns and a good situation. Your lines have fallen in pleasant places. Here's a little present," he said, and going over to the sideboard, took three dried figs from a dish, and gave them to the girl. But shortly after this token of esteem Hetty, for a time, lost favour with Mr. Miggens.

It happened in this way. An old woman, who was known as Widow Brown, lived in the neighbourhood. She chiefly existed on the alms which she solicited. The old creature's body was bent from age and rheumatism. This blear-eyed old woman was not, perhaps, a very deserving object of charity, for more than once she had been in an advanced state of intoxication on the king's highway. She was a nonagenarian, and though she had dwelt for such an unconscionable time in this vale of tears, she showed no signs of leaving it. Now all students of that great German philosopher, Nietzsche, know his ideas as to the existence of "feeble, ailing, needy creatures." In fact, according to the philosopher, they have no right to live, and it is our bounden duty "to do away with beggars and close our ears to misery." Of course Hetty had never read Nietzsche. She was a simple little girl with a great well of profound pity in her heart for the poor, the miserable and the suffering. So one day when old Widow Brown rapped with her long stick at the back door of

the Fuchsias, Hetty not only admitted her, but permitted her to warm her shrivelled hands by the kitchen fire, and gave her a cup of milk and slice of bread and butter. As old Mrs. Brown was sipping the milk with relish, the door opened with portentous slowness to admit Mr. Miggens, who had been working in the back garden.

"My! My! Hetty," he exclaimed, "surely you have not been giving away the milk I pay for, and my bread and butter?"

Hetty stammered that she had not thought about the milk not being hers, and that the old woman seemed very hungry.

At this juncture the Widow Brown, who had a vivid recollection of previous encounters with Mr. Miggens, gulped off the milk with surprising rapidity, and seizing what remained of the bread and butter in her contorted fingers, darted to the back door and disappeared. Mr. Miggens looked very grave and displeased.

"It seems to me, Hetty," he said drily, "that you are charitable at my expense. In my absence you make presents of my provisions. Do you remember the verse we learned in the nursery:

He who stoops to steal a pin,
Some day will steal a larger thing?"

Hetty turned scarlet at this reproof and faltered an apology.

"You are forgiven, Hetty," said Mr. Miggens

magnanimously, "but do not again give away your master's things without his sanction."

Mr. Miggens then left the kitchen, and returned a few minutes afterwards with an illuminated scroll bearing the inscription, "There is an eye that seeth all things."

Having produced a hammer and some tacks, he fixed the scroll over the fireplace, Hetty wondering the while if the inscription alluded to the vigilance of Mr. Miggens' eyes.

Notwithstanding the assurances of forgiveness Mr. Miggens had given her, Hetty noticed a change in his manner towards her. He no longer told her she had fairy feet and no figs fell to her lot. But his coldness was not of long duration. One day he came to the kitchen to overhaul the locks (which he constantly examined) and found Hetty looking very pretty in a new lilac print-gown. She was making an apple dumpling, and had the rolling pin in her hands. Her sleeves were tucked up above her pretty rounded elbows, and on the table were some rosy-cheeked apples, some russet pears and a dish of piled up lemons, all of which homely elements would have made the most delightful objects for a painter of still life. The air breathed a fragrance of thyme, mint and cinnamon, the firelight flickered on the highly polished pots and pans, and cast its ruddy glow on Hetty's hair. The kitchen resembled a Dutch interior by Gerard Dou.

"Well, Hetty, I see that those capable fingers

of yours are very busy," said Mr. Miggens, not insensible to the charm of the homely scene.

"Yes, sir," answered Hetty, smiling, as she endeavoured to scrape the flour off her arms. Mr. Miggens followed her movements with his eyes. Here the parrot, which had always evinced an unconquerable aversion to Mr. Miggens, ruffled his plumage and screamed an ugly word accompanied by the inevitable "Fi, donc." Mr. Miggens was visibly disconcerted and remarked that the parrot's language was most unseemly, and that it was an "ungodly bird born in a heathen land and acclimatized in a Papist country."

"Do you know, Hetty, what a papist is?"

"Yes, sir, I heard father say that mother was one," said Hetty.

"Tut! Tut! My! My! I hope you were not inculcated with any dangerous doctrines?"

"She taught me nothing but what was good, sir," said Hetty, "and," she added sadly, "she died when I was very young."

"Ah," said Mr. Miggens much relieved. "You must read one of my sermons on 'Moses the Lawgiver.' I have had it typed and it will be profitable reading for your leisure moments. I treat of Rome in that pamphlet and prove, I think, not unskilfully, that the molten calf erected for worship by the children of Israel was symbolical of the Church of Rome and its various idolatrous doctrines. When Moses chid

the Israelites he was, as it were, addressing himself to the Papists."

Hetty did not express any opinion on the subject, not being qualified to do so, as she was but imperfectly acquainted with the history of Moses. However, she promised to read the pamphlet, which promise she fulfilled and found it dry reading. Mr. Miggens had succeeded in painting the great Jewish lawgiver in most unattractive colours. Hetty greatly feared that he would give her more pamphlets to read, but this fear was not realized as he had some important business on hand which caused him to forget her spiritual needs.

CHAPTER XIII

HETTY VISITS IVY FARM

Dear nature is the kindest mother still,
Though always changing in her aspect mild.

BYRON

SINCE her arrival at the Fuchsias, Hetty had had no news of her family. They seemed to have quite forgotten her existence. It was evident that they had not troubled to inquire for her. She was relieved at their silence but a little chagrined that her father should apparently be so ready to forget her. Had he come to claim her, she would have regarded his coming as a veritable misfortune, but, with the usual inconsistency of human nature, she felt wounded at his indifference. Over and over again she speculated about her home, and at last her great curiosity impelled her to make an effort to obtain some tidings of it. She had been nearly five months at the Fuchsias, when, one bright February day, she had a few hours at her disposal and determined to utilize them in visiting the neighbourhood of her old home.

There was a promise of spring in the air, and as there had been a white frost the night before, the roads were in good condition for walking.

The sun shone brightly, and the sap seemed to be stirring in the trees, whose branches were silhouetted against the clear blue sky. Birds were showing signs of activity, and crows were noisily heralding the first signs of spring. Hetty walked along briskly, conscious of a feeling of well-being and happiness. She recalled the last time she had limped along the same road, driven from home by Mrs. Marrington's cruelty. How sad the world had seemed that night, but to-day it was good to be alive. In the fields long-limbed lambs frisked gaily by their mothers, as if inviting them to come and enjoy a gambol and leave aside maternal responsibilities. A flight of starlings fluttered and hovered in a field near the road. "How pretty they are!" thought Hetty, as they all rose suddenly with wings simultaneously outspread. Their aerial flight was not ambitious. They fluttered near the sun-kissed earth, now forming themselves into a square, and then spreading themselves out fanshaped. The pretty light lining of their upturned wings was silvered by the sun, and made a vivid contrast to the darker plumage of their bodies. Hetty prudently hugged the hedgerows as she walked along. Should she meet either her father or Mrs. Marrington, she determined to conceal herself. But there was the heath to be crossed where concealment was impossible. Would she walk on or turn back? Curiosity urged her

onwards. At last she was in sight of the farm, and standing still, overcome with emotion, she recalled her joyless childhood, and poor Bennie's untimely end, the thought of which made her heart beat wildly. After a moment, her excitement passed away, and she looked with calm, observant eyes at her former home. She was surprised to see that no smoke was coming from the chimneys, and that it seemed quite deserted. On approaching the house, she observed that there was a bill of sale on the windows, and that the place had all the appearance of having been vacated for some time. A man was ploughing in a field close by, and hastening to him, she asked how long the farm had been untenanted.

"Nigh upon three months," he said; "the bailiffs came down upon the place, and the people who lived there disappeared, and have not been seen or heard of since. They must have gone to some distant place, I'm thinking," he said, as he resumed his ploughing.

CHAPTER XIV

ADRIFT

Et je m'en vais
Au vent mauvais
Qui m'emporte
De ça de là
Pareil à la
Feuille morte.

PAUL VERLAINE

HETTY walked slowly back to the Fuchsias, busy with her thoughts. Her parents' disappearance had given her ample food for reflection, but she had no affectionate remembrance of them. By their departure from the farm, she was adrift on the world. She now felt herself to be entirely alone, a mere unit among busy people, intent on their own affairs, and mentally compared herself to a leaf in autumn, blown aimlessly hither and thither, the plaything of the winds. She reached the back door of the Fuchsias, and, still absorbed by her thoughts, stumbled over a tool basket. Looking up to ascertain to whom the basket belonged, she observed a figure examining the lock of the door leading into the kitchen premises, and remembered that Mr. Miggens had told her the locksmith was coming to repair the locks. The man, hearing a footstep, turned round, and Hetty recognized

Sam Slater, the young artizan, to whom she had once sold a glass of milk in the tea garden at Ivy Farm. The recognition was mutual.

"You!" he said, "where have you been hiding yourself? I thought you had disappeared from the face of the earth. Many's the time I passed by the farm in hopes of catching a glimpse of you—I even raised a thirst and invaded the tea garden and boldly demanded a cup of milk from a precious ugly female, who was as disagreeable as she was ugly." From the description he gave, Hetty at once recognized Mrs. Marrington. Slater continued: "From her I learned as how you were an ungrateful hussy. I tried blooming hard to find out where you were, but it was waste of time, I left the farm none the wiser," and he added with a smile, "business never took me that way again, but what are you doing here?"

Hetty replied that she was in service.

"My eye!" exclaimed Slater, "I hope Miggens pays your wages regular; from what I know of that old gimlet it would be as easy to draw blood from a flint as to make him produce oof."

Hetty said that Mr. Miggens was very kind to her; at which remark, Slater gave a long low whistle, and then observed that Hetty was "a green one."

Having given vent to this expression, he resumed the examination of the lock, and

Hetty went indoors. Later on in the day, as she was making herself a cup of tea, Slater presented himself in the kitchen and demanded some matches. He wanted to examine the lock of the cellar, and, as the light in it was bad, required a candle and matches. Hetty handed him these, and, as she did so, saw him look longingly at the teapot, and thought she might offer him some tea. After all, it was her own. Mr. Miggens allowed her a quarter of a pound per week, so that she need have no conscientious scruples in asking Slater to have a cup. The young man promptly accepted her timid invitation, and, seating himself at the kitchen table, chatted sociably. He was most entertaining, his very inflections of voice were droll, and, being a capital mimic, he gave an excellent rendering of Mr. Miggens, drawing down his lip, folding his hands across his waistcoat, and speaking slowly and with great unctuousness. The imitation was so irresistibly comic that Hetty found it difficult to refrain from laughing, for she felt it would be ungrateful to laugh at her employer. Slater, observing that his powers of mimicry were not altogether tasteful to Hetty, broke off his performance to remark that she was extraordinarily like a young lady friend of his, a very nice young woman named Emma. "And do you know," he said, "that I first liked her because she was so like another young woman I knew, whose name I cannot recall."

Hetty remarked drily, as she rose to wash the cups, that Slater's admiration seemed to be pretty general.

This observation did not in the least disconcert the locksmith, who remarked cheerfully that he was constancy itself, and was always faithful to the same type, even when represented by another woman. "Always in love with the same type, my dear, as the author chaps say. I'm striving hard to meet my hideal, and in my search I sometimes loiter on the road, and wile away an hour. One must have an hoff moment sometimes as an hartistic pal of mine says."

Hetty tried in vain to suppress a smile, for Slater's mimicry and conversation were most amusing. At that moment, however, there was a step on the stairs, and they heard Mr. Miggens wondering audibly from afar how the mending of the locks was progressing. Slater seized his candle and darted towards the cellar, while Hetty disappeared into the pantry.

Slater had a prolonged job at the Fuchsias. Mr. Miggens was always fussing and fidgeting about the locks; he lived in a state of extreme apprehension lest, owing to his reputation for great wealth, he might be robbed. He was so suspicious and nervous that he would not employ a local locksmith, and was constantly sending to London for Slater, who was a very competent workman. Slater told Hetty that

he was earning a good sum of money weekly, and, some day, hoped to be in a position to start a business of his own. "But," he continued regretfully, "I spend a lot of money. I am of a sociable nature, and like a theatre or a music 'all of an evening, and that runs away with a lot of money. I expect to be really wealthy one must be a closed-fisted cove like Miggens, and never treat a pal."

CHAPTER XV

MIGGENS REPRIMANDS HETTY

Pansies that's for thoughts
There's fennel for you and columbines.

SHAKESPEARE

AFTER some time, Mr. Miggens noticed with great annoyance that Slater was much attracted by Hetty, and spoke disapprovingly to the girl on the subject.

"No idle chattering with that young workman," he said to her one day. "He's got his business to attend to, and you have yours, or mine, which comes to the same thing."

On one occasion, Mr. Miggens found Slater in the kitchen chatting with Hetty, and very severely reprimanded the young people, who had not heard his approach. The locksmith was teaching the parrot a verse of a popular song from the music-halls, which the bird repeated with an air of great solemnity, and with an accent suggestive of Mr. Miggens. This highly delighted Slater, and, indeed, the bird was so droll that tears rolled down Hetty's cheeks from laughter, and she was obliged to put her apron over her head in order to stifle the sounds of her merriment, lest they should

penetrate to the parlour where her master was.

As for Slater, he was thoroughly enjoying himself, having quite forgotten all about his locks. Hetty was looking pretty and animated, and he was pluming himself on having amused her. Elated by his success, he gave a loud guffaw of laughter at some drollery of the parrot. The sound reached Mr. Miggens, who, having listened, for a moment, at the top of the stairs, descended to the kitchen, and, having sent Slater to attend to his business, turned to Hetty and accused her of flirting with the locksmith. Hetty, who enjoyed Slater's society from a youthful love of fun more than for any other reason, was terribly perturbed by the accusation and, for a time, carefully avoided his society. Slater, although he wondered what he had done to offend her, determined to make amends, and one morning on his arrival in the kitchen, having taken off his hat very carefully, he disclosed a beautiful bouquet in the crown. Such a delicious collection of spring flowers! Great velvety pansies, daffodils, waxen narcissus, and sweet-smelling wallflowers were intermingled with maidenhair fern. He told Hetty that he had begged the nosegay from a friend, who was employed in a nursery garden, and that he had arrived at the Fuchsias with the flowers in his hands, but on catching sight of Miggens in the parlour window, had deemed it expedient

to conceal them in his hat. He went on to say that he hoped the flowers had not suffered much, and that they had only been a few minutes under cover. They proved to be but little damaged, and quite recovered their freshness in a jug of water.

Hetty was delighted with the gift, and placed the bouquet on the kitchen table so that she might inhale the fragrance of the flowers as she went about her work. Mr. Miggens came to the kitchen that day, and immediately spied the bouquet.

"Where did you get those flowers, Hetty?" he said.

The girl told him, and he listened in silent displeasure, mentally resolving never again to employ Slater.

But this resolution was of short duration for, before a month had passed, he had telegraphed to Slater to come again to the Fuchsias. A robbery had taken place in the immediate neighbourhood, and he was greatly agitated thereby. Fernside, the residence of two maiden ladies, the Misses Dimple, had been broken into one night, and the burglars had abstracted the plate from the sideboard in the dining-room, and some money from an escritoire. Mr. Miggens was immensely dismayed when the milkman brought this intelligence to the Fuchsias the morning after the robbery. He insisted upon paying the ladies a visit of con-

dolence, and they gave him a most graphic description of the ingenuity with which the burglars had contrived to enter the house, and the manner in which the lock of the back door had been picked.

"One cannot be too careful about having really dependable locks," said the eldest Miss Dimple, while the second thanked heaven that they had not been murdered in their beds, for the cook had been gagged and left for dead in the kitchen.

Mr. Miggens' blood curdled in his veins at these details, which the Misses Dimple recounted with relish. They quite enjoyed describing the burglary. It invested them with an importance which they had never hitherto enjoyed, and unconsciously they exaggerated the perils from which they had escaped. But Mr. Miggens, haunted by a besetting fear of being robbed, took all the old ladies said *au pied de la lettre* and, rushing home in a state of panic, sent off a telegram to Slater to come immediately and put a double lock on the kitchen door. The locksmith, however, was unable to obey the summons. He wrote that he was detained by a job at Canterbury, but, as soon as it was completed, would arrive at the Fuchsias. Mr. Miggens fretted and fumed with nervous irritability, and spent half an hour every evening inspecting the bars and bolts. He was extremely peevish and was continually fault-finding.

At this time the illness of a favourite sister, who lived in Camden Town, was a cause of great anxiety to Mrs. Miggens, added to which she had to bear the brunt of her husband's irritability. He had no consideration for her, although her anxiety about her sister was quite apparent.

One day Hetty heard a telegraph boy's rap at the door, and, on going into the parlour a few minutes afterwards, found her mistress in tears, with the orange-coloured missive in her hand. Hetty felt genuinely sorry for Mrs. Miggens, who was crying in a feeble, helpless sort of way. The girl approached her, and timidly inquired if she could be of use. Mrs. Miggens, between her sobs, told Hetty the cause of her grief was the increasing illness of her sister. "Little hope of her recovery is entertained," moaned the old lady. "It seems only yesterday that Jane and I were playing with our dollies together, and now poor Jane is at death's door. How time slips by! I should like to see her once more," continued Mrs. Miggens plaintively; "I can't bear the thought of her dying without my being near."

"Why not go to your sister, ma'am?" Hetty ventured to suggest. Mrs. Miggens, struck by the suggestion, feebly remarked that Mr. Miggens might object to her spending money on a railway journey.

"Surely not in a case of serious illness," said Hetty.

Mrs. Miggens remained silent for some minutes and then, suddenly making up her mind, said:

"I will go to my sister at any cost. Hetty, get a railway guide and let us look up the trains."

They found a train left Arbury station in an hour, which would give Mrs. Miggens time to pack a few things, and drive to the station. Mr. Miggens was away at Maidstone, where he was giving his lecture on "Moses" to some appreciative admirers, so his wife did not have to consult him as to her journey. Hetty went upstairs with the old lady to assist her to pack. This was no easy task as Mrs. Miggens' agitation caused her to give many confused directions.

"Hetty," she said, "put my cap with the purple ribbons into the bandbox so that I can find it handy on my arrival, and put Mr. Miggens' sermon on 'Moses' inside the cap; it might be profitable reading for Jane, not that she was ever spiritually inclined, but at the end people change."

Hetty doubted the truth of this remark, as she packed the sermon on "Moses" into the cap. Then she helped Mrs. Miggens to tie her bonnet strings, and, having put the old lady into her best beaded cloak, she was equipped for the journey. But there were a thousand parting directions for Hetty before she finally departed. "Take good care of your Master," she said to the girl, "give him chicken for dinner on his return home. Boiled chicken,

remember; he is partial to boiled chicken with parsley sauce."

Hetty promised to remember, and at that moment, Tom drove the pony chaise round, and reminded Mrs. Miggens that she had barely a quarter of an hour in which to catch the train. The old lady thereupon seated herself hastily in the trap, and calling out good-bye to Hetty, was driven off to the station.

Hetty stood on the steps until they were out of sight and then turned indoors. The house felt very lonely and still all the long afternoon. The girl missed her kind old mistress, and were it not for the parrot which chattered noisily, she would have been very dull indeed.

CHAPTER XVI

MIGGENS REVEALS HIMSELF

He's the greatest monster, without doubt,
Who is a wolf within, a sheep without.

DENHAM

MR. MIGGENS returned the next day in the afternoon. He seemed very well pleased with the manner in which his sermon on "Moses" had been received at Maidstone. Hetty informed him of Mrs. Miggens' absence, and he received the information with cheerful serenity. "Ah! so she went to Jane," he said; "Jane is getting on in life, and we all have to go. Here to-day and gone to-morrow. But the train journey has given me an appetite. Can you get me a slice of ham, a glass of sherry and some biscuits? Mind you cut the ham thin."

Hetty, surprised at Mr. Miggens' callousness, went downstairs to fulfil his commands. She cut the ham with delicacy and dexterity and, putting some cheese and biscuits on a tray, carried it to the parlour. Mr. Miggens ate with apparent relish, and while Hetty waited on him, gave her a lengthy description of the meeting at Maidstone, and dwelt with complacency on his own eloquence and power of moving his hearers.

Hetty listened dutifully, and Mr. Miggens seemed pleased at the interest she seemed to evince.

"Hetty, it is not given to everybody to preach," he announced.

"No, sir," acquiesced Hetty politely, as she prepared to remove the tray.

When she approached Mr. Miggens she noticed that he was regarding her intently with a strange expression in his eyes. Once before she had perceived him gazing at her in the same way. It was on the day when he had found her with her sleeves rolled up making an apple dumpling. Somehow she felt vaguely alarmed without being able to define her feelings.

"Hetty," said Mr. Miggens, still continuing to stare at her oddly, "don't you find that tray very heavy for your little hands?"

The girl replied that she was quite capable of carrying the tray.

"My, it is heavy," said Mr. Miggens. Rising from his seat and going towards her, he placed a hand upon Hetty's, as if he were feeling the weight of the tray. Hetty placed it rapidly on the sideboard. She was feeling frightened and Mr. Miggens' next remark did not reassure her.

"You are looking very well to-day," he said, "that little bow you wear is most beguiling, most becoming and alluring."

As he spoke, he touched, with a podgy finger,

the bow with which Hetty's collar was tied. His face was very much flushed, his breath smelt of sherry. Hetty felt repelled by his appearance. At that moment, to her great delight, the hall-door bell was rung, and she proceeded with alacrity to answer the summons, while Mr. Miggens hastily seized a temperance review, and appeared to find its contents absorbingly interesting.

The visitor proved to be an elder of the Tabernacle where Mr. Miggens preached and prayed. As Hetty ushered the visitor into the parlour, he examined her with curiosity and inquired, after she had left the room, "Is that a new servant, Miggens?"

"A girl my wife has befriended," said Mr. Miggens with an assumption of indifference.

"She is very comely, friend," said the elder.

"She is a good servant," said Mr. Miggens in an impersonal manner, "but what service can I render you?"

The two men proceeded to discuss business matters. Hetty, relieved at getting away from Mr. Miggens, sat by the kitchen fire and thought over what had passed with feelings of misgiving. How strange Mr. Miggens had been! Supposing he were to seek her in the kitchen what was she to do. How she longed for the return of her mistress. She was quite alone in the house with him, as the charwoman was ill and that scamp Tom had taken advan-

tage of his employer's absence to go on the spree. He was not of sober habits, and there was no knowing when he would return to the Fuchsias. The girl was remarkably innocent, owing to the seclusion of her childhood, yet her instinct warned her not to remain alone in the house with Mr. Miggens. Alas! What was she to do? When she had reached this juncture in her thoughts, the hall door was banged loudly, the visitor had gone. Simultaneously with the banging of the door, she heard footsteps on the stairs, which she recognized as those of Mr. Miggens. Her heart seemed to stand still. She felt turned to stone, and withdrew to the farthest end of the kitchen, where the parrot's cage was, hoping, as it were, to gain courage from the companionship of the bird. Its presence made her feel less lonely. Mr. Miggens entered the kitchen noiselessly, and glanced round for a moment. Not seeing Hetty he said, "Where are you, child?" Then his glance fell on her, and he continued, "Ah, there you are, talking to that foolish bird." Coming quite close to her he thrust his finger into the cage with a playful gesture. The bird screamed angrily, and endeavoured to peck at the finger which Mr. Miggens rapidly withdrew and, darting to the farthest side of the cage, playfully wagged an admonitory finger at the parrot, saying, "Mustn't, Poll, naughty Poll." His elephantine frolics filled Hetty with misgiving.

She cast despairing eyes at the door. Would no one come! Alas! Who was there to come?

"Hetty," said Mr. Miggens, suddenly catching her hand, "what an amount of affection you waste on that bird; come, bestow a little on me instead," and drawing the girl towards him, he attempted to kiss her. Hetty's heart beat rapidly. She wondered had he gone mad, and made a desperate but ineffectual effort to free herself from his grasp. Before another moment had elapsed, the girl felt a shower of kisses being printed upon her face. She thought she was about to faint, the room seemed to swim, the power of resistance was slipping away from her, when suddenly a hand was laid roughly on Mr. Miggens' shoulder, and a voice called out, bidding him leave the girl alone. The voice belonged to Slater, the locksmith, who having finished his job at Canterbury had hurried to the Fuchsias in obedience to Mr. Miggens' telegram. He had found the back gate open, and having entered the kitchen unperceived, took in the situation in one swift, comprehensive glance.

"You canting hypocrite!" he screamed, and emphasized each word by shaking Mr. Miggens, just as a terrier would shake a rat. "You old rascal, how dare you ill-treat the girl; you're old enough to be her father, and ought to know better."

"And you," said Mr. Miggens spitefully, "are young enough to be her lover." Then, drawing himself up with a lamentable attempt at dignity, he adjusted his ruffled collar and

addressing Hetty, said, "Miserable and ungrateful girl! Who befriended you when your own parents saw fit to cast you off? Ah, you hoodwinked me, you did. I was mistaken in you." He spoke rather hastily as Slater was advancing towards him menacingly. "No further violence," he said, addressing Slater, "and you, deceitful girl, I leave with your lover." Then turning upon his heel, he left the kitchen.

Hetty sank upon a chair, and covering her face with her hands, sobbed hysterically. Slater filled a glass with water, and held it to her lips. "There's nothing now to be afraid of," he said soothingly. Notwithstanding this assurance, Hetty continued to sob. She was thoroughly unnerved.

"What am I to do?" she asked wildly. "Missis is away, and I can't stay here alone. Where am I to go?" she asked, wringing her hands.

"Can't you get somebody to stay with you until Mrs. Miggens' return?" Slater asked.

Hetty replied in the negative, and began to cry afresh.

"Well, then," said Slater, after a pause, "I think you had better come with me."

"But how can I go with you?" asked Hetty, through her tears. "A girl can't go away with a man to whom she is not married. Oh, I don't know what to do," she moaned.

Slater went to the window, and stood there for some time in silence, drumming on the panes

with his fingers. Then, turning to Hetty, he said, without meeting her eyes:

"Come, put some things together and let us go to Canterbury, where we can be married."

This seemed to Hetty a solution of her difficulties. She was not the least in love with Slater, although she liked him, and had always found him kind, yet it was impossible for her to stay on at the Fuchsias, and marriage with Slater seemed her only alternative. The friendless girl had a vision of a comfortable, tidy home of her own, where she would be free to live a well-ordered life. So, after some parlance, it was arranged that she and Slater would go to Canterbury by the next train. There, he said, they could spend their honeymoon. Before going Hetty wrote a line to Mrs. Miggens—she felt she could not leave her kind mistress without some explanation, however lame it might be. She wrote:

"Dear Missus,—I fear you will think me a very ungrateful girl for leaving you so suddenly, but this is not the case. I shall always bear in my heart the recollection of your kindness to me. I am leaving to be married to Sammy Slater, the locksmith. We suddenly made up our minds to get married. I thank you very much for your goodness to me while I was in your service. May God reward you!

"Your obedient servant,

"Hetty Marrington."

Having addressed an envelope, Hetty placed the note in a prominent position on the kitchen dresser. Slater, who was waiting impatiently while she wrote, now bade her put on her hat so that they might start immediately, else they would lose the train. Hetty, worn out from fright and fatigue, obeyed him implicitly like a child, and a few minutes later the two had stolen away together, leaving Mr. Miggens in ignorance of their departure.

CHAPTER XVII

AT CANTERBURY

Come live with me and be my love.
MARLOWE

THE appearance of Hetty and Slater was not in the least like that of an engaged couple. Hetty's eyes were red from weeping. She wore her Sunday dress of sombre black, and a black sailor hat covered her pretty hair. Slater was wearing his working clothes, and carried his tool bag. His spirits seemed to have undergone a change, and his bearing was less jaunty and self-assured than was usual with him. An old countrywoman, observing the couple at the station, opined that they were brother and sister called away "suddenlike" to some sick bed. Seeing that Hetty was nervous and apprehensive about starting on a journey, which was to be so momentous to her, Slater shook off his depression, and endeavoured to rally her drooping spirits. He bought her a box of chocolate from the lid of which a type of English beauty simpered. He also supplied her with a number of halfpenny novelettes. Evening was closing in, when they reached Canterbury, and Hetty was unable to admire the ancient town

with its quaintly fashioned houses. Indeed she evinced little interest in her surroundings, her thoughts being fully occupied with other things. She was anxious that her marriage should take place as speedily as possible, and asked Slater if they were to be married that evening.

"How can we be?" he answered shortly. "Why the Registry Office is closed now and what clergyman would marry us at this hour? We had better drive to an hotel for the night."

To this proposal Hetty was about to object, but Slater pushed her into a fly, saying in peremptory tones, "Come trust me. 'Aven't I always been your friend?" And before she could make any further objection he bade the cabby drive to the Queen Philippa. "The hotel is kept by a very old friend of mine, a motherly soul. You will like her," Slater explained.

Hetty felt reassured by this, it would be pleasant to meet a motherly soul. As they drove along, Slater pointed out various places of interest. "Canterbury is full of historical associations," he said. "Such toffs as Cardinal Pole and the Black Prince are buried 'ere. We'll go and see their tombs in the Cathedral to-morrow."

"But shall we have time; aren't we to be married to-morrow?" asked Hetty with a note of anxiety in her voice.

Slater made some inaudible reply to this query as the fly stopped at the Queen Philippa.

It was a small old-fashioned inn, over which hung a quaint signboard representing Queen Philippa kneeling before Edward III, imploring him to spare the lives of the Six Burgesses of Calais, who, attired in abbreviated garments, wore that air of jovial unconcern ascribed to the jolly Miller of Dee, whom the well-known nursery rhyme has immortalized. The painter had produced the King, Queen and Burgesses with such similarity of feature, that they might easily have passed for the members of a large family. A landlady, with a face so round and red as to suggest the idea that a swarm of bees had recently alighted on it, and had stung her beyond recognition, advanced to the door, and greeted Slater with effusion. He introduced Hetty as a "lady friend" of his, and said she was tired, perhaps the landlady would bring her upstairs where she could "'ave a wash and brush." The landlady ushered Hetty into the stuffy, best bedroom upholstered in magenta rep. The woman looked curiously at her, but made no remark, as she brought some water in a cracked jug for the girl to wash her hands and face.

Hetty, having washed away the traces of her tears, untied a parcel she had with her, and drawing from it a brush, smoothed her hair. She then went to the coffee-room, where Slater told her she would find him. They had the room to themselves save for a commercial

traveller who sat at the far end, and was occupied in studying a time-table. Slater ordered supper, which consisted of chops and shrimps; a gold-necked bottle stood on the table.

"'Ave some fizz?" said Slater, helping her.

Hetty would have infinitely preferred a cup of tea to the sweet nauseating stuff Slater poured so lavishly into her glass. He perceived that Hetty did not care for the champagne. "Don't care for the helixir of life?" he said. "'Ave some tea instead." He ordered some tea, of which she was glad, as the journey had made her thirsty.

They lingered long over the meal. Slater could be entertaining, and he tried to amuse Hetty until she had almost forgotten the unpleasant events of the day. He had always the power of making her laugh. Presently the commercial traveller left the room and Slater moved his chair quite close to Hetty's. He had left off joking and laughing, and for a few moments remained silent, with deep-set eyes fixed unblinkingly on her face. He broke the silence by saying:

"Who'd 'ave thought this morning that before night you and I'd 'ave been so intimate like?"

As he spoke, his face was so near her that the end of his long moustache touched her cheek. She looked at him, his eyes held hers strangely. It was as if the glance paralysed her. It seemed

to hold and enfold her. An unaccountable feeling came over her. Was it repulsion at his nearness? He reminded her unpleasantly of Mr. Miggens. "But he has been kind to me," she thought, "and I have promised to marry him to-morrow."

"Hetty," said Slater, lifting his glass slowly to his lips and putting it down again untouched. "I was extraordinary drawn to you the very first day I saw you. Yes," he said musingly, more to himself than to Hetty, "it was a case of love at first sight so it was." He remained silent for a few minutes, and then, taking his eyes slowly from the girl's face, and looking straight before him, said, "Supposing there was some reason which prevents me marrying you, would you throw a poor devil over, or would you come to him and be kind?"

Hetty half rose from her seat. Slater, who had turned his eyes towards her again, watched her movements intently.

"I only said *supposing*," he remarked. "Come, what would you do?"

"I should thank you for all your kindness to me," said Hetty, "and I should go and look for a situation. I would get a situation even if I had to set out walking to London for it."

"You have strict notions, Hetty," said Slater, "I wonder how you came by them."

"My mother when dying bade me lead a respectable life. I gave her a promise which I intend to keep," said the girl resolutely. "If you cannot, or will not marry me, oh, say so and let me go. I can work."

Slater seemed to be struggling with conflicting emotions for some minutes. He looked dejected and irresolute. Then gradually a smile broke over his face, as his eyes sought Hetty's. "How very pretty she looks," he thought. "So slender and lissom in her black gown." She looked a little weary, perhaps, her small head drooped a little, and her blue eyes were bright from her recent tears. "Yes, she is distractingly pretty with that soft, grave look of hers. She is good and modest too," thought Slater, and this further enhanced the attraction she possessed for him. His mind was soon made up; he rose and gave a laugh. "Well, Hetty," he said, "it seems you don't love me as much as I thought you did. However, 'All's well that ends well!' I was making game of you, and you rose to the joke as a trout to a fly. Well, we'll be married to-morrow. I have a friend here, a parson cove, and he'll turn us off all right. So good night, go to bed and sleep well and be as fresh as paint to-morrow for your wedding." So saying, Slater drew Hetty very close to him, and kissed her good night, while she involuntarily recoiled from his embrace.

"What a shy little monkey it is!" said Slater.

"Well, good night, little girl." So saying he took himself off to the relaxation of the bar and the cheerful society of the buxom landlady.

CHAPTER XVIII

A VISIT TO THE CATHEDRAL

I never weary of great churches. It is my favourite kind of mountain scenery. Mankind was never so happily inspired as when it made a Cathedral.

R. L. STEVENSON

THE whole of the next morning Slater was absent from the Queen Philippa. Before leaving the inn he had told Hetty that he was going to look up his friend, the "parson cove," in order to get him to perform the marriage ceremony.

Shortly after noon, Slater, accompanied by a clergyman, presented himself at the inn. The former explained his protracted absence by saying:

"I've been digging out the sky pilot, Mr. King; he'll marry us at once by special licence at the Queen Philippa."

Mr. King was a repellant type of cleric, with a furtive, downcast glance, and a bloated face. His broadcloth was shiny and his collar crumpled.

The marriage service occupied but a few minutes. The clergyman read from the Book of Common Prayer in a hoarse mumbling

tone. When the ceremony was concluded, Slater took Mr. King to the tap room to drink the health of the newly married couple, which the clergyman seemed nothing loath to do.

In speaking of King afterwards, the landlady of the Philippa told Hetty that he had been curate of a church somewhere in the neighbourhood of Canterbury, and had got into some trouble. She could not say how, she had heard he had been to Oxford and was a great scholar, and she had often seen him in the bar. Hetty, however, lent but a distracted ear to the landlady's chatter; she was much relieved that the wedding ceremony had taken place, and gave herself up to the pleasant reflection that she had obeyed her dead mother's last injunctions. "How hard it is to be respectable," she thought, "when one is pretty, young and penniless. The men who would lead us wrong, scorn us should we fall into temptation." Thus mused Hetty as she waited for the return of Slater.

They spent the afternoon wandering through Canterbury, and amongst other places visited the Cathedral. Inside its great gateway, they lingered for a while by the quaint old shops in the close, where souvenirs of the town are sold, pictorial postcards, and views of the Cathedral. A print representing the pilgrims of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" on their way to the shrine of Thomas à Becket "the assistence of the Holy

blissful Martyre for to seek," interested and amused Hetty. What a jovial gathering these pilgrims must have made! How irresistibly comic was the stout Prior on his donkey, whispering some joke to a still stouter nun. The picture caused them both much laughter and merriment. But, when they had entered the great Cathedral, the laughter died on Hetty's lips, and the majesty and solemnity of her surroundings impressed and awed her. She stood under the vaulted arches, feeling very small and insignificant. The dim restfulness of the Cathedral, its silence and spaciousness, pleased her. The rays of the afternoon sun filtered through the stained glass, and steeped the recumbent effigies of knight and warrior in rainbow hues. A sensation of peace and reverence stole over Hetty, but Slater's cockney soul was not easily awed. Looking at the sculptured figures of the tombs of Cardinal and knight he remarked, "Seemingly there were rum coves in the olden times." His sense of humour was much tickled by the Black Prince's armour hanging over the tomb, and he remarked that it must have been a bad fit, or else have shrunk in the wash, and opined that it would have taken a skilful locksmith to lock him into it. But Hetty was scarcely conscious of Slater's presence. She had even forgotten her wedding of the morning, her spirit was assimilating itself with her surroundings.

A verger approached, droning, in apathetic accents, the history of the Cathedral. Hetty and Slater joined the few tourists who were following him, as he pointed out tombs and monuments of interest. Such historical names as those of Stephen Langton, Cardinal Pole, and Cardinal Kemp fell unfamiliarly upon Hetty's ears. Of history she knew nothing, but her vivid imagination peopled the church with haughty prelates and strangely garbed Saxon kings. Her indignation was aroused by the story of the martyrdom of the indomitable Becket which the old verger, from force of habit, narrated at the same hour each day with a certain dramatic power. Hetty listened intently while she pictured the knights in the waning light of a February afternoon, following Becket with stealthy footsteps into the Benedict Chapel. It seemed to her that she was actually present at the martyrdom, and had witnessed the dragging of the archbishop across the cold flag floor ere the fatal sword-thrust terminated so dramatically the career of that indomitable churchman, who had the courage of his convictions, and who did not stoop to sacrifice his conscience to his king. When the verger had concluded his description of the assassination, all colour had forsaken Hetty's cheeks, and her eyes shone with indignation. "It was a cowardly murder," she said passionately, "shame upon the monks for deserting the archbishop."

Slater laughed at her excitement. "It's all very fine to talk," he remarked, "but what were the poor chaps to do against armed men, and them with only their prayer books in their 'ands which they didn't 'ave much use for in a scuffle you bet?"

Seeing that Hetty still looked sad, Slater good-naturedly remarked that "it was all over and done with long ago anyhow."

The girl was silent for a moment and then asked:

"Do you think that the spirits of those cruel murderers hover about invisible here?"

"That's a lively idea of yours," Slater remarked with a shudder. "Golly, it's cold enough here for anything. It's a queer creepy sort of a place. We'd 'ave done better to 'ave taken the excursion train to Folkestone, where there are splendid Christy minstrels performing on the pier."

"Oh, no! no!" answered Hetty, "I loved seeing the Cathedral. It's just magnificent."

Slater regarded her with a puzzled air as he said, "Well, at any rate I've 'ad enough of it. Come, we'll take a turn round the town."

Accordingly they sauntered about the town, looking into shop windows. Slater called Hetty's attention to a hat smothered in red feathers, which was displayed in a milliner's window. Pointing to it he said briefly, "That's fine." Then without any further observation he went

into the shop, and asked a very genteel young lady the price of the hat. The sum she mentioned seemed so large to Slater, that for a moment it staggered him, but only for a moment, for he seemed to see himself walking out with Hetty on Bank Holiday exciting the envy and admiration of all his "pals." After some bargaining, Hetty became the unwilling possessor of the magnificent head-gear. It was with a pang of regret that she saw her neat sailor hat consigned to a tissue paper bag, and the heavy new one placed upon her head.

Slater having cast many approving glances at her, now proposed that they should adjourn to some tea garden and have tea. They found what they wanted just outside the town, and while Slater ordered tea, muffins, and cress, Hetty, incorrigible little dreamer, listened to the singing of the birds and gazed into the depths of a small pond, upon which a swan glided to and fro, steering its way between a profusion of trailing weeds and water-lilies. They had tea under the shade of a hawthorn tree, and a sweet-brier bush close by mingled its odours deliciously with the fragrance of the hawthorn. After tea they threw crumbs to the swan. Sometimes Slater teased the bird, and it made vicious darts at him, accompanying its movements by angry sibilant noises. Hetty would have enjoyed the nice old garden, the birds and the graceful but bellicose swan, had she felt

more at home with Slater, who insisted on holding her hand and putting his arm round her waist at every possible opportunity. She found these close embraces very distasteful and had to acknowledge to herself that she was not the least little bit in love with him. Indeed, she felt miserably ill at ease. They returned to the Queen Philippa arm in arm, and as they walked along Hetty fancied that all the passers-by fixed their eyes on her remarkable head-gear.

CHAPTER XIX

EMMA

Away, away, from men and towns
To the wild woods and the downs—
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music, lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,
While the touch of nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart.

SHELLEY

AFTER three days spent in Canterbury, Hetty and Slater settled in London, in the neighbourhood of Euston, where Slater's lodgings were situated. Hetty was bewildered and confused by the noise and bustle of the great metropolis. How terribly noisy it was with its medley of confused rumblings and hooting of motors! She had a horror of the streets, and the dense traffic. It was June and the weather was close and oppressive. The two rooms which they occupied were over a small eating-house, so that a perpetual smell of cooking pervaded their apartments. Their little sitting-room, which served as parlour and kitchen, was Hetty's despair. It was crowded with things and it seemed to her that she could never get it in order. Locksmith's tools, boxing gloves, pictures

of actresses (music-hall stars) off packets of cigarettes, lay about in the wildest confusion. Hetty, surrounded by such a miscellaneous collection, felt as if she were unable to breathe freely. She rarely went out, and only when accompanied by Slater. She did not know her way about London, and the crossings terrified the timid country girl, so she spent hours alone in the stuffy room, not knowing whether to rejoice or repine at her solitude. It was dull to be by herself, yet when Slater was with her, his presence jarred upon her, for she had a physical horror of him, and his beer-smelling kisses. He, however, was immensely in love, and when his day's work was over, would hurry home, bringing with him some dainty for tea. In the evening he generally took Hetty to some music-hall, which was always densely crowded, and the atmosphere of which reeked with tobacco fumes. The heat, the flare of the lights, and the noisy orchestra often gave her a headache, and frequently the performance which delighted Slater wearied her. Her amazement at the acrobats and tight-rope dancers amused him. Their writhings and twistings in mid-air alarmed the girl to such an extent that she would close her eyes tight to shut out their contortions, while Slater looked on with breathless interest. The more dangerous the performance, the more he enjoyed it. "A slip and the performer is in kingdom come," he would say. At such

remarks Hetty's flesh would creep, and the entertainment was quite spoilt for her.

When the performance was concluded, they would plunge into the thronged streets, and wind up the evening's amusements by supping at some tavern or chop-house. Slater was liberal with his money, and never dreamt of saving any of his wages, often treating those with whom he had but the slightest acquaintance. It seemed to Hetty that their evenings were passed amongst a crowd with whom she had nothing in common, and she often thought regretfully of the country. Sometimes she would linger before a chestnut tree in some dusty square with its crimson candelabras all aglow, and conjure up a vision of June in Kent. After all, her life at Ivy Farm had some compensations, for on summer evenings, when her work was finished, she had been free to sit and dream under the chestnut tree which flourished at the very door of the farm-house.

Slater strongly disapproved of Hetty's habit of dreaming. He instinctively felt that, when thus occupied, her thoughts were far away from him—he had no share in those dreams which afforded her so much pleasure, and this knowledge excited a feeling of jealousy in his narrow mind. He frequently roused her from these reveries by a joke, or the pressure of a warm, moist hand upon her arm, and the startled girl would remember that she had lost freedom of

both body and soul. He enjoyed much popularity at the taverns and chop-houses which they frequented and had many friends whose society was not congenial to Hetty.

One night, as they were leaving the Golden Sheaf public-house, Slater was greeted with effusion by a young woman accompanied by a man.

"Wot! Emma?" Slater exclaimed. "Wot a time since we 'ave met. Who's your pal?"

The man was then introduced as Bill, "a very special friend" of the young woman.

"Come, 'ave something for the sake of 'Auld Lang Syne,' said Slater, turning back into the tavern, greatly to Hetty's chagrin, for she was tired and anxious to get home. Slater ordered a cold eel pie, and some stout. Emma told Hetty that she was Slater's second cousin. She was only a few years older than Hetty, to whom, oddly enough, she bore a striking resemblance. The expression of her face, however, was dissipated, though her manner was pleasant and easy. The girls talked together, while Slater and Bill discussed a boxing match which was to take place very soon. Emma professed herself delighted with Hetty's hat (the hat Slater had given her at Canterbury). She made her take it off and turning it round examined it.

"It's real stylish and becoming," she said. "It must have cost a lot, but Slater was always

free 'anded. Money goes through his fingers, same as sand through a sieve. Where did you meet him, my dear ? "

While Hetty recounted her first meeting with Slater, Emma listened, apparently much interested, and when Slater at last rose, saying it was time to go home, she bade Hetty an affectionate good night, telling her she would call round some day soon and see her. She kept her word and was continually turning up at meal time and idling Hetty, who was anxious to get on with her work.

" Thought I would drop in to see 'ow you're getting on," she would say. " 'Ow 'ot it is ! One does get thirsty this weather."

Hetty would then feel bound to offer refreshments, over which Emma lingered for what seemed to her an unconscionable time. It did not take her long to discover that her guest was idle, gossiping, and pleasure-loving.

Slater, however, enjoyed Emma's society. He would chaff and laugh with her, and she was much interested in them both. One day, when he was out, she began questioning Hetty about him, and she told her that he had been kind to her when she was in service. She had been obliged to leave her place suddenly, and was in great distress, and Slater had persuaded her to marry him and give up service.

" To marry him ! " echoed Emma in astonishment.

"Yes, to be sure," answered Hetty.

"And where were you married?" questioned Emma.

"At the Queen Philippa in Canterbury, by special licence of the Archbishop of Canterbury," said Hetty, with no little pride.

Emma looked at her in silence for a moment, and then burst into an uncontrollable fit of mirth, her laughter causing tears to roll down her cheeks. When at last her merriment had subsided, she exclaimed:

"Bless your hinnocent 'eart, child, where 'ave you lived to think that Archbishops ever trouble to give poor folks a special licence?"

Hetty flushed with vexation and said:

"But I tell you we were married by Mr. King, a clergyman."

"King, did you say?" asked Emma, "a tall chap with a bloated face? I know him well. He was silenced long ago, he's a hard drinker. I see him often at the Golden Sheaf. Well, Slater took you in finely. You're no better than any of the rest of us."

Hetty was horrified, and Emma, seeing that she was much agitated by the information she had so heedlessly imparted, said:

"Come, cheer up, no good can come of the dumps."

But Hetty remained silent, and Emma, seeing that she was not likely to be good company that afternoon, wished her good-bye, and hurried away

When Slater returned home that evening, tea was not prepared, and Hetty was sitting in an attitude of profound dejection, her hands folded idly on her lap.

"You look out of sorts, 'Etty," he remarked, "come get tea ready, and afterwards we will take a 'bus to 'Yde Park and 'ave a blow of fresh air."

She rose slowly and prepared tea in silence. When he had finished his tea, he again looked at her and remarked:

"You do look bad. Did anything happen when I was out?"

Hetty pushed her cup and saucer from her.

"Yes," she said, "Emma was here, and she told me our marriage was a sham one. Oh! Sam, how could you have behaved so!"

Slater turned pale and, for once, could not find words, and Hetty continued, "Why were you so cruel as to deceive me? Why didn't you marry me?"

"Because," said Slater huskily, "I couldn't. There, 'Etty, since you must know, I'm already married."

There was a painful silence, and then Slater went on to say:

"I know I 'ave behaved shocking bad, but I loved you, 'Etty, and could not do without you. I wish you 'ad been content to remain in ignorance. Truth is cruel 'ard."

He paused for a moment and then said:

"Yes. I married years ago, when quite a lad. I was apprenticed to a locksmith up at Newcastle. There I met a woman older than myself, and no great shakes either. Well, I have always been a fool where women are concerned, and I married her. She left me after a time for some one else. I 'aven't seen her for years, though I believe she's still alive and living up North somewhere. But, 'Etty," he continued, "don't let 'er come between us now. You won't let wot I 'ave told you make any difference?"

As he spoke, he came close to her, but she pushed him away.

"Leave me," she said," I must think things over. You have behaved disgracefully."

He looked at her pale, agitated countenance, and seeing that it would be useless to speak to her at that moment, took his hat and went out quietly.

Hetty sat for a long time where he had left her, her head buried in her hands. Her vision of a nice trim little home had been cruelly swept away. Yes, as Emma had said, she was no better than the rest of those women she had so despised, yet her sorrow was mingled with a feeling of relief at not being really married to Slater. She need never again submit to his embraces. The last three months had been a dreadful nightmare. How she had loathed the public-house,

and its sordid pleasures! She had felt degraded and humiliated at the life she had been compelled to lead. After a while, she rose and went about her usual work feeling that she had gained her freedom.

CHAPTER XX

THE JULY SALES

And nowadays the law is ended as a man is friended.
H. Brincklow

Next day Hetty's agitation seemed to have passed away. She prepared Slater's breakfast and talked to him with an air of unconcern. He was relieved by the calmness of her demeanour and remarked, before setting out to his work, that he was glad she was going to " act sensible." He little knew what the girl had resolved to do. In the hours of the night, she had irrevocably made up her mind to leave him, but knowing he would strenuously oppose her doing so, she determined to conceal her intention from him and to disappear quietly. She would look for a situation. Surely in a big city like London there must be some work for an industrious, honest girl. At this thought her spirits rose. Slater had deceived her, she owed him nothing, nor did she consider herself in any way bound to him. However she must form some definite plan before leaving, and have some asylum of refuge in readiness. She would look round her, and go carefully to work. Slater mustn't

suspect anything. She remembered having seen on her arrival at London a notice board at Charing Cross Station, which cautioned young country girls in search of situations to apply to some Home for work in order to escape perils, and surely she could find some such home. As she was busily turning over these plans in her mind, the door was opened and Emma entered.

"Working 'ard as usual, 'Etty," she said, "wearing your fingers to the bone. No man is worth so much trouble. Get on your things and let's 'ave a look at the shops. To-day is the 1st of July and the summer sales 'ave begun. We'll take a bus to Oxford Street."

At any other time Hetty would have rejected such a proposal, but to-day she was glad of it, for she could be on the look out for registry offices. Quite joyfully she agreed to go with Emma.

"'Etty, do you notice anything about me?" asked Emma, "take a look."

Hetty glanced up and exclaimed:

"Why, your hat is just the same as the one Sam bought me at Canterbury."

"Not a pin's difference between the two," said Emma gaily. "I knew you would not mind my copying it. I did it cheap too, got the feathers for next to nothing. Put on your 'at and let's compare notes."

Hetty did as she was bid, and Emma and she put their heads together, and looked into the dim, cracked glass over the mantelpiece.

"Why, we might be sisters," said Emma gratified, and indeed the casual observer would have found a difficulty in distinguishing one girl from the other, for they were of the same height and had the same colouring; the similitude of their hats emphasized the likeness which they bore to each other. Emma lingered at the glass, gazing at herself complacently, until Hetty said:

"Do come on; I feel I want air."

"You do look tired to be sure and down in the mouth," said Emma, for the first time observing Hetty's pallor and the shadow beneath her eyes. "'Ave you and Sam been 'aving a shindy? Sam is 'asty when jealous."

"Oh, let us be going," said Hetty, ignoring the question.

The two girls went down the narrow staircase into the street, where Emma hailed a bus and then climbed on to the top. Emma talked and laughed noisily during the drive, while Hetty silently noted the streets through which they passed. They alighted at the top of Oxford Street, and walked along, gazing into the shop windows. They passed a large furniture warehouse, where a number of gilt and white Empire chairs were displayed.

"Fancy sitting on chairs like those and hordering servants about," said Emma, "it's a wonder to me that rich folks ever get old."

They passed on to stop in a few seconds before

a jeweller's shop. Emma looked longingly at the wine-coloured rubies, the sparkling diamonds, and the deep blue sapphires ; a tiara of diamonds and pearls excited her envy and admiration.

"Some old fright will buy that," she prognosticated, "who'd look better in a cap such as my granny wears."

Hetty could not help laughing at the aggravated tones of her voice, and Emma herself joined in the laugh. By this time the girls had reached Marshall and Snelgrove's window. Here Emma paused and drew a deep breath.

"What lovely things!" she exclaimed. "'Etty, do look at the 'ats, do look at the laces and the lovely hartificial flowers."

Hetty did as she was told, but, knowing that she was never likely to possess any of the articles displayed, viewed them with a certain amount of detachment, but Emma had become unconscious of any presence save her own. She stood quite close to the glass, staring into the window with a fixity of gaze, while Hetty moved off a little, and turned to observe the passers-by. Her attention was arrested by a beautifully-turned-out equipage in which sat a lady, evidently waiting for somebody who was shopping. Hetty thought her very beautiful and graceful; the waving plumes of her blue hat matched her eyes, and as her glance met that of Hetty, it seemed to the girl on the footpath that the lady smiled graciously. A

supercilious footman stood by the carriage, and rudely pushed away a beggarman, who was importuning the lady to buy a flower.

"James," she said, "don't send the poor creature away, he looks tired. Give him this," and she drew a threepenny-bit from her purse.

The beggar mumbled humbly, "Thank you, lady," while he shot a malignant and triumphant glance at the footman, and Hetty felt pleased that the lady she admired so much should have a kind heart. Just then Emma, who had finished her inspection of the window, joined her friend.

"Look at that pretty lady, hasn't she a kind face?" said Hetty.

"She 'as a grand carriage any way," said Emma viciously, "and a grand footman," she added. "It must be nice to 'ave the hordering of six feet to the right about like this. Get my 'andkerchief, James; I left it hupstairs," said Emma, throwing back her head and speaking in the languid tones she thought befitted a *grande dame*. "Hout for callers, James," she minced.

Hetty was amused and laughed, but Emma was spiteful.

"It's all very fine to laugh," she said, "but it's 'ard to be poor, and not be able to buy pretty things."

Their next stop was in front of a haberdasher's, where all sorts of wares were displayed.

"There are stylish 'at shapes," she said, "at 1*s.* 11¾*d.*, and that purple veiling is only 5*d.* the yard," and she stepped over the threshold of the shop. Just inside the entrance was a table with an assortment of odds and ends. Emma hovered round it for a time; a brilliant scarlet leather belt, ornamented with steel beads, caught her fancy. Surreptitiously, she lifted it from the counter, and approaching the unconscious Hetty, who had her back to the shop and was observing the passers-by, placed it gently in her jacket pocket. Seeing that Hetty had not noticed her, and having both hands free to appropriate anything else she might fancy, she returned to the shop.

This time her glance was attracted to a counter on which umbrellas were displayed. She gave a hasty and furtive look round, no one seemed to notice. Boldly seizing an umbrella she walked out of the shop followed by Hetty, pale and horrified, who was now thoroughly roused from her absorption and noticed the theft.

"How could you, Emma?" the terrified girl remarked, but Emma did not reply. In another moment, Hetty felt her arm grasped by a shop assistant, while the wily Emma had disappeared.

A policeman was summoned, and Hetty was given in charge.

The shop assistant said that a red leather belt had been abstracted from a counter just inside

the shop door. On searching Hetty's pockets, they found a scarlet belt which proved to be the one which Emma had admired so much and which she had quietly slipped into the pocket of Hetty's jacket. Hetty was dumfounded at the sight of it. The shop assistant further accused her of stealing an umbrella, which, of course, could not be found, Emma having long since disappeared with her booty.

Hetty, almost unconscious from fright, was dragged to Vine Street Police Station. Next day she was brought to the Police Court, and was charged with theft. Tongue-tied from sheer terror, she made no defence; she was, as it were, in a dream. A policeman deposed that when she had been searched, the belt was found on her person. The shop assistant then gave further evidence. He said he had seen the girl examining the belt and could not have made any mistake as to her identity for she wore a remarkable hat, the same as she was now wearing in the dock. It was her hat which had first drawn his attention to her. Then he went on to say that he had been serving a customer at the time, but had "kept an eye" on the goods exposed for sale, and had seen the girl move from the counter, where the belts were, to the counter on which the umbrellas lay. He had gone to the cash office for a second, and on his return found a red leather belt missing, and also a silver-handled umbrella, value

£2, which the girl must have passed on to a confederate.

The magistrate looked grave; he said that there had been frequent cases of shop-lifting of late, they must be dealt with severely, he would sentence the prisoner to—but before he had completed his sentence, there was an interruption in Court. A young man arrived in a breathless state and demanded to be sworn, saying he had evidence to prove that the girl was innocent.

The newcomer gave his name as Frank Leybourne, youngest son of Sir Hugh Leybourne, and said that he was an artist by profession. He was of prepossessing appearance; his clear-cut features and deep grey eyes gave him an expression of frankness and sincerity. Hetty, who, from her entrance into the dock, had never once lifted her eyes from the ground, now directed her troubled gaze towards her saviour, who, it appeared, had come at very great personal inconvenience to give evidence on her behalf.

The young man deposed that on the day of the arrest he had been driving on a bus in Oxford Street, which came to a stand before a haberdashery shop, owing to the congested state of the traffic, and his attention had been attracted by two girls, who were at the entrance of the shop, both wearing large hats covered with scarlet feathers. One of the girls was the prisoner, the other was a girl very much like her,

whom he had seen enter the shop, and then come back rapidly towards the accused, who was looking at the passers-by and had not noticed her friend quietly slipping something scarlet into the pocket of her coat. The other girl then re-entered the shop, and returned with an umbrella. The prisoner had seemed much agitated at this, and stood rooted to the spot, as if horrified. He had gathered from her gestures that she was remonstrating with her companion. Then the bus moved off. When he alighted, he overheard some one say that a girl had been arrested for shop-lifting up Oxford Street. Afterwards, on thinking the circumstance over, the thought had occurred to him that perhaps the wrong girl had been arrested. He had clearly seen that she was but a catspaw, and had felt compelled to come to the Police Court, and see how matters stood.

Things now assumed a different aspect. The magistrate thanked the young man for coming, and addressing Hetty said :

"You are discharged." But Hetty stood motionless, like one in a dream.

"Are you deaf, young woman, that you don't hear his Worship speaking to you?" said a constable, standing near.

"Come, take yourself off."

Thus admonished, Hetty stumbled out of the dock into the street. Her heart was throbbing. She felt faint. The noise in the streets grew

into one confused din, she tottered and would have fallen had not a hand been stretched out to support her.

"Poor girl, she's frightened and tired," said a kind voice.

The fresh air was acting as a restorative. Hetty raised her eyes, and saw Frank Leybourne standing by her. A friendly policeman now came upon the scene.

"A first offender, I suppose, sir?" he said pleasantly.

"No, no," said Leybourne quickly, "a case of mistaken identity."

"Ah, I see, sir," said the policeman politely but incredulously.

"Have you had any food to-day?" asked Leybourne of Hetty, observing her weakness and pallor.

"No, I could not touch food this morning. Oh, let me die," she moaned.

"The young 'uns generally takes on like that," said the policeman cheerfully. "But it's astonishing after a time how they enjoy the atmosphere of a police court. If they are smart they bowl over the counsel, and chaff his Worship."

"Is there anywhere near where the poor creature could get some food?" asked Leybourne, slipping a shilling into the man's hand.

"Poor young woman!" exclaimed the policeman in altered accents. "Yes, sir," he con-

tinued, "there's an aerated bread shop less than a hundred yards off."

The two men assisted Hetty to the shop, where some hot milk was procured.

The young woman in the shop evinced a kindly interest in the girl, holding the cup to her lips; she coaxed her to drink the milk, saying persuasively, "There's a dear, drink it off, it will do you good."

Hetty drank the milk and revived.

The shop girl then went in search of further refreshments, and Leybourne began to question Hetty.

Had she no parents, he asked, and where did she intend to go. The kindly accents, the handsome face, wearing an expression of sincere pity and concern, moved Hetty strangely. The reaction was too sudden, and she burst into tears.

"Oh, sir," she cried, "I'm most unhappy. I have nowhere to turn."

"Have you no means?" asked the young man, and as he spoke, he felt in his pocket.

"I don't want money, sir," said Hetty, "only put me in the way of earning my living. Don't leave me, sir," pleaded Hetty hysterically, "don't leave me on the streets."

"When you have eaten some food you will tell me your story," said the young man.

Hetty, feeling that at last she had found a friend whom she could trust, did as she was told,

and between the morsels of food which she valiantly tried to swallow, she told her new acquaintance the story of her flight from the Fuchsias, and how she had been trapped into a sham marriage.

"An unlikely story enough," thought the young man. "A sham marriage sounds highly improbable, and yet, oddly enough I believe the girl. She has an honest countenance and seems gentle and modest."

"But what in the name of heaven am I to do with her! If I were not a good-natured, credulous ass, I would hand her over to the workhouse authorities, but my conscience won't permit me to do such a thing." Then, an idea occurred to him and he addressed himself to Hetty, saying:

"Come along, I will see what I can do for you."

He had resolved to bring the girl to his cousin, Lady Grace Verdale. Grace was always sympathetic, and misery was the sole qualification necessary to gain her favour.

A four-wheeler was called and Leybourne, accompanied by Hetty, drying her eyes with a very moist handkerchief, drove to Grosvenor Square, where Lady Grace lived. Leybourne felt awkward and embarrassed sitting opposite Hetty, whose befeathered hat towered over a pale woebegone face.

When they reached Lord Verminster's house

in Grosvenor Square, they were told by a caretaker that Lady Verminster and Lady Grace had left London the day before for the remainder of the season.

"There's no help for it," thought Leybourne. "I must take the girl to my rooms and ask Mrs. Flanagan to look after her for the present."

Mrs. Flanagan kept apartments in Gordon Square, where Leybourne had rooms, with a large studio attached. Mrs. Flanagan had once been housekeeper in the Leybourne family, and was devoted to Frank. She looked in wonderment at his companion, and, indeed, it was surprising to see a smart, well-groomed young man with a shabbily gowned young woman, whose pensive drooping head was weighed down by a gaudy feather hat. Had Mrs. Flanagan been the typical British landlady, she would have mentally registered Hetty as a minx and a hussy, but being Irish and warm-hearted, and boundlessly imprudent, her heart went out to the poor, forlorn girl, whom she took under her wing before Leybourne had time to explain how she came to be under his protection. When at last he did so, Mrs. Flanagan merely remarked that Hetty looked weak and tired, and badly in need of a friend, and added the good-natured woman with tears in her voice, "She's just about the age my poor dear daughter Nora would be now, if theAlmighty had not called her to Himself."

"Don't you worry, Master Frank," she said, "I'll look after the poor creature, while you can be thinking what to do for her."

"Thank you, Mrs. Flanagan," said Leybourne, "but that's just it. What in the world am I to do for her I should like to know? However, I shall write to my cousin, Lady Grace. She may be able to make some suggestion."

So Leybourne went to his studio and wrote a letter to his cousin, which treated of other subjects besides Hetty.

PART II

CHAPTER XXI

GRACE VERDALE

She was his life,
The ocean to the river of his thoughts
Which terminated all.

BYRON

LADY GRACE VERDALE was sitting before a desk in her private sanctum, the room set apart for her own special use. A pile of letters lay unheeded beside her, for she was deep in thought. From time to time she glanced round the room with unseeing eyes. It was an exceedingly pretty, tastefully furnished room. The French windows opened on to charming pleasure-grounds where roses rioted in full bloom. Through the open window their perfume was wafted, mingled with that of verbena and mignonette. Books lay about everywhere—old friends showing signs of wear and tear. Grace Verdale was of constant nature, and a victim to ancient family retainers, who made heavy demands on her purse. She had literary and artistic tastes, painted with no small skill, and judged pictures

with sagacity. On the walls of her room were several admirably chosen paintings. Some of them had been picked up abroad, and her cousin Frank Leybourne had given her the benefit of his advice. She possessed one picture which he pronounced to be a genuine Velasquez. It represented a stiff little crinolined child wearing a heavy brocade frock, whose innocent baby face and soft eyes looked over a most enormous ruffle.

Grace never looked at the picture without recalling the day, now five years ago, when she and Leybourne had bought it. They had met travelling in Spain, and one hot day attended service together at the Cathedral at Seville, Lady Verminster having stayed indoors owing to the heat. The service and solemn gregorian chants had deeply impressed them. When returning to the hotel they lost their way in a narrow by-street, and their attention was attracted to the dusty begrimed picture which was exposed to view amongst many worthless objects in a dingy curio shop.

"Doesn't it look like a Velasquez, Frank?" Grace had asked as she scrutinized the picture.

"By Jove!" was all that Leybourne could ejaculate.

There and then they entered the dingy little shop, which smelt horribly of garlic, and bargained with a stout ignorant old woman, whose rouged and powdered face was adorned by quite a hardy moustache. They succeeded in buying

the somewhat faded and time-worn picture for a mere song, and between them they carried it to the hotel in triumph. As Grace had been the first to discover the Velasquez, Frank insisted that she should keep it, and it now adorned the walls of her room at Verminster.

As she looked at the picture that bright July day, she remembered their walk home with the purchase. In what wild spirits she and Frank had been! How they had laughed and talked and extolled their own cleverness in securing the Velasquez! Grace recalled, with satisfaction, that, passing a shop, she had caught sight of her face in a mirror. How nice she had looked in a mantilla with a high Spanish comb in her bright tresses. Ah! but that was five years ago now. Had she much changed, she wondered. She rose and went towards a table upon which a silver-framed mirror stood, but pushing the glass from her, she reseated herself at her desk, plunged her pen into the ink and commenced a letter to the secretary of some local charity.

She was frail in appearance, her tall figure was willowy and graceful, and her deep blue eyes which looked out of a pale sweet face spoke of noble thoughts and a generous, courageous disposition. There was nothing mean or petty about her. Her own standard of life was exalted, but if others failed to reach that standard she had only sympathy and sweet compassion for

them. Exacting to herself she was tolerant of others.

Though an only daughter and a great heiress, her life was sadly monotonous. Her mother, Lady Verminster, was an early Victorian *grande dame*. Her circle was very exclusive and therefore limited, and she abhorred the *nouveaux riches* and Americans. In fact, she said that they made London society quite intolerable, so that, except for a few weeks in the season, the Verminsters rarely came to town, and Grace spent most of her time at Verminster Manor, their country place. Her father had a model farm which occupied most of his attention. He was a keen sportsman and popular with the farmers and country people, for it must be confessed he enjoyed the society of his social inferiors, and in moments of relaxation was apt to forget that he was the twentieth Earl Verminster and that his ancestors had fought at Crecy. He stood in awe of his wife, who never allowed any of his boon companions inside the great gates of Verminster, so that at times he sought relaxation away from home.

Grace's life, but for her many intellectual interests, would have been very dreary indeed; she rarely saw people of her own age and often felt a wish for companionship.

In the village of Verminster there was a large paper mill where many hands were employed. From an elevation in the grounds of Verminster

the mill could be overlooked. It was Grace Verdale's custom on fine days to walk to this spot and see the workers disperse to their midday meal. Girls of all ages came trooping out, laughing, talking, and sometimes singing, all full of vitality and the joy of living. Some of the girls, arm-in-arm with their special friends, exchanged whispered confidences, others were met by lovers or by younger members of their family. Grace would watch them, enjoying their air of irresponsible gaiety, as she turned home to luncheon, knowing that her afternoon would be spent in paying or receiving dull visits, or in playing bézique with her mother, who was very exacting and required so much of her daughter's time and attention that Grace was rarely able to enjoy the companionship of her beloved books. Her father and mother were very fond of her in their own selfish way, but she must be entirely at their disposal. They could not bear her out of their sight, and she had never been permitted to marry.

Any suitors who had aspired to her hand had never answered her mother's requirements, and it had never occurred to her to consult her daughter's inclinations.

Lady Verminster considered herself the infallible head of not only her own but her husband's family, which she ruled with kindly determination. She had innumerable visitors to stay with her, contemporaries of her own youth and

relations, for the most part bachelors and spinsters, impecunious, weedy, neurotic and well-bred, who were glad to spend the summer months at Verminster, and while listening with a differential air to her ladyship's advice, enjoyed free of expense the beautiful grounds, the gardens and the sunny terraces, and last but not least the appetizing cookery of Monsieur Adolph, the French *chef*. Grace must always be at the disposal of these guests, though she did not find their society congenial, nor their conversation stimulating. But she was of an amiable and unselfish disposition, and listened politely to High Church Uncle Cuthbert's impractical schemes of reunion with Rome, and was ever ready morning and afternoon to play croquet with Cousin Alethea, and "up Jenkins" in the evenings, though both games bored her to the verge of tears.

CHAPTER XXII

AN UNKNOWN ARTIST

Nay, falter not—'tis an assured good
To seek the noblest—'tis your only good,
Now you have seen it; for that higher vision
Poisons all meaner choice for evermore

GEORGE ELIOT

FRANK LEYBOURNE was a second cousin of Lady Verminster and a favourite with her. He had been invited some years ago to spend the month of July at Verminster. During one of her rare visits to London her ladyship, accompanied by Grace, had visited his studio and had been graciously pleased to inspect his work on which she made several preposterous criticisms, at which Frank had not betrayed his inclination to laugh, but had preserved a respectful and serious countenance. In the course of the visit Lady Verminster had remarked that Frank was looking washed out; he was working too hard; he must come to Verminster and get strong, and Frank looking into Grace's beautiful eyes, had accepted the invitation with alacrity. He had always loved his cousin ever since they were mites and trundled hoops together, and his love for her had made him indifferent to other women; between them and him her shadow fell.

Leybourne was always ready to help Grace with her painting. During his stay at Verminster, the young people would take their easels and camp stools and go off for long expeditions, spending the dreamy July days out of doors. They would choose some picturesque spot to paint—a field in which wild flowers peeped through the bending corn, or a rippling stream, whose margin was rich in aquatic vegetation, bulrushes, meadow sweet, purple flags, and great pink feathery grasses. How Leybourne had enjoyed those delicious perfect days, with the woman he loved by his side! He felt that, though he must always love Grace, he should not betray his feelings to her.

Her parents were ambitious for her. Leybourne was the third son of an impecunious baronet, and though he had painted pictures innumerable, had only succeeded in selling a few. City magnates, South African millionaires and other wealthy patrons of art do not buy pictures, even good ones, from unknown artists, so that he painted more for his own satisfaction, and for the pleasure it gave him, than for pecuniary reasons. He knew instinctively that Lady Verminster held artists in small esteem, and generally spoke of them as "artist men." How then could he tell her that he loved her daughter? He resolved to hide his feelings, but Grace guessed his secret and reciprocated his affection. On the last day of his stay at

Verminster, when he and Grace were returning home through a field of ripe barley swaying to and fro in the softest of summer breezes, he threw prudence to the winds, and before he realized what he was about had told her how much he loved her and that he could never be happy without her. She listened to his declarations in silence, and after a pause said :

"Oh ! Frank, what will you say to mamma ? "

"Never mind mamma, Grace. Do say you love me."

"Indeed, dear Frank, I do," said Grace. "What's to be done ! Mamma would never hear of our engagement."

Leybourne was young, and with the supreme arrogance and optimism of youth felt he could surmount every difficulty.

Grace, however, was perfectly correct in her surmise. Lady Verminster was inflexible. She listened to Frank more in surprise than in anger, and her looks seemed to suggest that she thought he was suffering from some mental aberration. She asked him with solicitude if he had not found the sun very hot that afternoon. It was not prudent to paint out of doors in such heat, he might get sunstroke. Of course he must abandon all notion of marrying Grace, he had not any fixed income, he was unsuitable in every way, he must leave Verminster next day, and could only return when he was prepared to meet Grace on the same friendly footing as

formerly. When Frank told Grace of his interview with Lady Verminster, she said:

"Go home, endeavour to paint a picture which will make the world talk. If you succeed in so doing mother may change. Nothing succeeds like success."

"Do you mean that I am to pander to the public taste and exhibit on the walls of the academy each year pictures of babies and puppy dogs, or else girls from Kensington with filleted hair and scant clothing, lolling about in impossible attitudes on marble floors, with taps and basins. The Turkish baths in fact, and call it *Greek Girls at the Baths*? Or am I to paint a problematic picture, and give it some sensational title such as, *Which does she love*, or *Who did the deed*, and owe my fame to a series of explanatory letters published in halfpenny papers, in response to the offer of a paltry reward for the solution of my problem?"

"Heaven forbid any such degradation of your art," said Grace, smiling, "but work hard and paint a really good picture and the public will sooner or later recognize your talent. Frank, I will wait for you, so do your best and be true to your art and to me."

"Heaven helping me, I will," said Frank, as he wished her good-bye.

It was five years since they had thus bidden each other farewell, and still the picture remained unpainted, a *Château en Espagne*.

Grace had seen but little of Leybourne since, for he was working very hard, and was often abroad. As she sat before her desk, she felt angry with herself for thinking so persistently of him, and, plunging her pen into the ink, strove to concentrate her thoughts on the work before her. She was thus deeply absorbed, when a servant entered the room. She did not look up at his entrance, thinking he was the bearer of a summons from her mother asking her to help to wind wools. The servant said :

" A letter for you, my lady."

Grace looked at the envelope, and recognized the writing as that of Leybourne. What a strange coincidence ! It seemed an answer to her thoughts. She waited to break the seal of the missive until the servant had left the room. It was the letter Frank had written asking Grace to interest herself on Hetty's behalf, and begun thus :—

" You will receive this letter on July 15. Do you remember July 15, five years ago, the barley field and the clamorous corncrakes ? But I am not writing to recall memories. I am writing to enlist your sympathy on behalf of a poor girl who, as far as I can judge, has been greatly sinned against."

Then followed an account of Hetty and her misfortunes. The letter wound up with :

"The great picture must still be painted, but I am working hard, and think that I am in sight of the promised land. A famous French art critic inspected my work the other day, I overheard him say to a friend who happened to be present, *Il ira loin ce jeune homme?* That was real praise wasn't it? *À Dieu*, dear Grace, and think over what is to be done for Hetty Marrington. I badly need advice.

"FRANK."

When Grace had finished reading the letter, she went to the morning room where she found Lady Verminster working at her embroidery frame.

"Mother," she said, "I have had a letter from Frank asking for advice. He is greatly perturbed as how best to help a poor girl who is in distress."

Here Grace read aloud that portion of the letter which treated of Hetty.

"Since when has Frank become the squire of distressed damsels?" asked Lady Verminster. She was in a gracious mood and said with lofty magnanimity, "I will give him the benefit of my advice, write and ask him to come here for a night, and we can talk matters over."

Lady Verminster was under the impression that Frank had obeyed her implicitly with regard to Grace. She missed his agreeable society, and being anxious to see him again, was willing

to regard what happened five years ago as a forgotten incident.

"Write to him to come at once," she said, "for I have written to the manager of the hotel at Bad Gastein to reserve rooms for us next week. Dr. Scot was here this morning and said my rheumatism must have effective treatment, so Frank if he wishes to see us had better lose no time in coming."

Grace could hardly believe her ears, but there and then wrote to Frank inviting him to Verminster.

CHAPTER XXIII

HETTY'S FUTURE DISCUSSED

The artist is the creator of beautiful things:
To reveal art and conceal the artist is Art's aim.

FRANK LEYBOURNE was not slow in obeying Grace's summons. The afternoon of the next day saw him and his portmanteau safely deposited at Verminster. Lady Verminster was at tea on his arrival in the cool, spacious drawing-room, the long windows of which opened on to the terrace. She received him majestically but graciously, and complimented him on looking so well. She herself was hypochondriacal, and informed him she was suffering tortures untold from rheumatism and neuritis. Frank expressed concern at her state of health, and suggested she should try some foreign waters for the benefit of her health.

"Ah," she said gloomily, "experience has taught me not to expect relief from visits to foreign watering-places; they are worse than useless, and, as for the water doctor," she said vehemently, "he is the lowest and most grasping type under the sun. I assure you they are positive sharks. But enough of myself. Grace is on the terrace. Go and tell her tea is ready."

Frank needed no second bidding, and, in another moment, was standing on the terrace, which commanded a view of the park and surrounding country. How delicious the country air was after the heat and stuffiness of London. The distant hills were wrapped in a haze of blue, and the park was dotted over with sweet smelling hay-cocks. Grace came towards him with a welcoming smile, she wore a vaporous white gown, and a rustic straw hat trimmed with roses.

"How kind of you to answer my letter so promptly," said Frank.

"Of course, I had to help you, Monsieur Philanthropist," said Grace. 'But how and where is your protegée?"

"She is still under the wing of my excellent landlady, who has quite taken a fancy to her, and is employing her temporarily as a servant. The girl is most willing and capable, and seems to be giving satisfaction"

"You shall tell me all about her after tea," said Grace. "You must be tired."

"How delicious the hay smells," said Frank, still lingering on the terrace.

"Yes," answered Grace, "we had a shower a short time ago, and after rain hay smells as if it were freshly cut. Were I a poet I should write a poem entitled 'The rain falls upon the hay.' Verlaine wrote *Il pleut sur la ville*, but I think my title is even more suggestive.

It conjures up a vision of all the wild flowers of July sending forth their sweetest odours, dripping wild thyme, honeysuckle, and clover all washed by rain."

"I see you are as fond of Verlaine as ever," said Frank, smiling.

At this juncture of the conversation, Lady Verminster (always careful of draughts even in July), thrust a muffled head through the French window, and called to Grace and Frank to come in, as tea was getting cold.

It was not until late in the evening that Frank had again an opportunity of private conversation with Grace.

After dinner, seeing that Lady Verminster was absorbed in a game of Patience, he suggested that, as the night was so warm and fine, he and Grace should take a stroll on the terrace. Grace was delighted at the idea.

"It does seem rash to run such a risk of cold," Lady Verminster remarked. "You must absolutely have a wrap, Grace."

A servant was dispatched for one, and, in a few seconds, returned with a soft scarf. When Frank had wrapped it round his cousin's slight form, they went out on the terrace.

As Frank had said, it was a beautiful evening. A pale, silvery moon hung over the old Tudor mansion, while the luxuriant foliage of the branches cast tremulous shadows on the gravel walk. They strolled in silence to the end of the

terrace, and leant over the parapet upon which jessamine and crimson ramblers clung. An ornamental fountain jetted water, with a sort of sobbing sound, which seemed a fitting accompaniment to the plaintive cooing of pair of ring-doves, in a wicker cage near by. A mellow stream of light from the drawing-room windows fell aslant upon the gravel walk.

Frank, who was enjoying the beauties of the night, felt singularly reluctant to break the silence which reigned between him and Grace. It was she who first spoke, and, when she did so, it was to inquire about Hetty. Frank had already told Lady Verminster all about the girl. Grace had listened, but the elder lady had not allowed her to say much.

"A few days ago," Frank remarked, "I should have believed it impossible that a respectable girl should find herself tempted and besieged on all sides."

"It does seem incredible," said Grace sadly, "but we must see what we can do for the poor girl. You say she is smart and adaptable?"

"Yes," said Frank. "Mrs. Flanagan is loud in her praises, and she keeps my studio neat and tidy and never loses anything."

Grace thought for a moment, and then said:

"Mason, my maid, is leaving, in some months, to be married. I shall miss her. She has been with me for years. If Hetty shows any aptitude for maid's work she might be trained. She

could take lessons in hair-dressing. Mason could initiate her in her duties and, eventually, she might become my maid, but I should not want her for at least six months. In the meantime she can stay with Mrs. Flanagan, who, as she was housekeeper in a big establishment, can train her to a certain extent. I will see Hetty myself on my return from Bad Gastein."

Frank expressed himself very well pleased with the arrangement, and the question of Hetty now being settled he was free to talk over personal matters.

"And how does the painting progress?" Grace asked, laying a slim hand, for an instant, on his arm.

"I am working very hard," said Frank, with a sigh, "but I'm never content with my work. I'm always striving after the unattainable."

"Your discontent," said Grace, "is merely the divine discontent of genius. If we were all quite happy and ambitionless nothing would ever be achieved. It would never do for you to be satisfied with your work."

Frank smiled, and was comforted.

"I sold a picture the other day," he said, "and got a pretty good price for it too. A city magnate was the purchaser. It was rather a pretty picture of some great upstanding pines with the sunlight shining on their trunks. The purchaser was a German, and bought it because he said it reminded him of the Great Forests of

the Fatherland. I was quite pleased until he explained to me that he liked the subject of a picture, and didn't care a rush for the painting. He told me he had a collection of paintings of historical subjects, and asked me to paint Sir Walter Raleigh spreading his cloak for Queen Elizabeth to walk on, or else Queen Elizabeth giving Sir Christopher Hatton dancing lessons. He said either subjects would make a fine picture."

"And you refused haughtily, I suppose," said Grace.

"Of course I refused, more rudely, than haughtily, I fear, but I am talking of myself. The worst of unselfish people is that they make one egotistical. When with you I seem to open the flood-gates of my discontent. But tell me, when do you go to Gastein?"

"In about a week's time," Grace answered, "and oh! isn't it delightful," she exclaimed enthusiastically, "Mother says we can come home by Dresden. I have never been there and long to see the picture gallery."

"I should like to see Dresden again," said Frank. "I might," he continued, "meet you there. I think you would find me of use. I know Dresden and its pictures very well and could show you round."

"Oh, Frank, that would be charming," said Grace.

A silence fell upon them. The night closed in,

the air grew chill though filled with the fragrance of July. A cloud obscured the moon. Birds were silent among the branches of the trees. The stillness was only broken by the sobbing sound of water from the fountain dropping into the marble basin in which water-lilies were closing their petals. Grace shivered, and Frank folded her scarf more closely round her.

"Grace, dear," he whispered, "it is so good to be with you again."

Then a form showed on the patch of light upon the gravel walk; it was Lady Verminster, who remarked that it was late. Frank must be getting to bed, he had an early start in the morning.

The three strolled back to the house together. In the hall candles were lighted and good nights said.

"*Au revoir*, at Dresden," Frank whispered into Grace's ear as he handed her her candle.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FLANAGAN MENAGE

This is a spray the bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure.
Ere to the high tree-tops she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's which the flying feet hung to
So to be singled out, built in and sung to!

R. Browning

While Hetty's future was being discussed at Verminster, she herself was living very happily in the present. She helped Mrs. Flanagan with the house work, and that worthy woman soon evinced a real affection for the girl, and one day confided to her, in a confidential outburst, that she could not abide the London servant girl, who was so high and mighty and, withal, a minx. She had just parted with her last hussey—a feather brained creature always gadding about and never attending to her work.

"Talk of Irish girls being lazy," exclaimed Mrs. Flanagan. "Why! I've seen decent, industrious girls in Ireland do twice the work on half the wages the London girl gets."

Here Mrs. Flanagan broke off her conversation

somewhat abruptly to stare for a moment meditatively at Hetty. When she spoke again it was to suggest that she should enter her service.

"I'll give you the same wages as I gave the last girl," said the kind-hearted woman. "No, I don't want a character with you," she said, as Hetty murmured some remark about having no reference. "I'm pretty good at reading character from the face, and if, after a bit, I find I have read yours wrong, why then you'll have to go. So there."

Hetty was delighted at thus easily procuring a situation. Mrs. Flanagan's house in Gordon Square was let out in apartments. Leybourne had one floor. His rooms consisted of a large, airy bedroom, a small sitting-room or den, and a large return room, which was really a studio. The house, before the advent of Mrs. Flanagan, had belonged to an artist. The floor above Leybourne was occupied by a young man named Dawlish, who described himself as a musician, and who was also something of a poet, a pleasant, irresponsible Bohemian. Between him and Leybourne a warm friendship existed.

Mrs. Flanagan made the two young men comfortable. For Leybourne she evinced an almost maternal interest. She had held him often in her arms when he was a baby, and she a bright-eyed lady's maid in his mother's service.

So much did Lady Leybourne value her that the pretty Irish girl was promoted to the position of housekeeper, and by her savings as well as by the aid of a legacy left her by a former mistress, was enabled to rent the house in Gordon Square and let it out in apartments. Mr. Flanagan had been a valet whom Mrs. Flanagan had met when travelling with the Leybourne family. The tall, handsome young Irishman had won her affections, and she had insisted on marrying him, but had been obliged to support him afterwards, for he was such a lazy, ne'er-do-well that it was with difficulty that he could be induced even to open the hall door at Gordon Square. When he condescended to do so, he was generally in his shirt-sleeves with the *Sporting Times* in one hand.

In the Flanagan ménage, Hetty's knowledge of cooking came in useful. She often helped Mrs. Flanagan to prepare the young men's dinner, the result being a marked improvement in the cooking.

It was Hetty's business to dust and keep the studio tidy and this was to her a pleasant task. She felt she could never do enough to show her gratitude to Frank Leybourne. How grateful she was to him and how she respected him. He was the first man who had ever shown her any kindness from disinterested motives. How different he was from the sanctimonious, hypo-

critical Miggens, with his trite moralizings, and platitudinous commonplaces, or the unscrupulous, dissolute Slater. How unfortunate she had been in ever meeting these two men!

At the sound of Leybourne's bell Hetty would fly to answer the summons, and would hover round him, happy if she could anticipate his wishes.

Leybourne, for his part, was pleased to discover in Hetty so good a servant. He was inclined to plume himself on his discrimination in believing what Hetty had told him about herself. Now that he had grown accustomed to her, he had almost ceased to perceive her prettiness, and was often unconscious of her presence. Even when he had gone to Verminster to consult Lady Grace about Hetty's future, he had not deemed it necessary to communicate to the girl the object of his visit. It was only when she missed his bell at tea time that she learned of his departure.

"It's long after five," she remarked to Mrs. Flanagan that day, "and Mr. Leybourne has not yet rung for his tea. Shall I bring it to him?"

"Mr. Leybourne's away," Mrs. Flanagan replied.

"Away!" echoed Hetty, surprised. She wondered where he could be.

"Oh, he often runs out of London to paint or stay the week-end in the country," said

Mrs. Flanagan vaguely. "So does Mr. Dawlish. He's been abroad for the past fortnight. One never knows when he may come or go."

But Hetty was not interested in Mr. Dawlish's movements, and hardly listened to the remark.

CHAPTER XXV

MR. DAWLISH

O God but art is long,
And short is life; and ever,
Despite mine uttermost endeavour,
Will fears my brain and bosom throng.
GOETHE'S FAUST.—WEBB'S TRANSLATION

NEXT day she heard some one playing the piano in the studio. Surely Mr. Leybourne must have returned, he might require something. She would go and see.

She entered the studio, but the individual seated at the piano was not Leybourne. He was a young man whose hyacinthine locks fell in dark, rebellious waves over an intellectual forehead. He did not look up as Hetty entered the room, but went on playing. Who could he be Hetty wondered as she picked a newspaper off the floor, and folding it neatly placed it on a table. She felt uncertain what to do. Should she ask the young man if he wanted to see Leybourne or should she go quietly out of the room. Just as she had determined on the latter course the young man spoke.

"Yes," he said, as if to himself, "it will do. I think it is really good."

Then he looked over towards Hetty with unseeing eyes, his thoughts were still with his music. Suddenly he asked her eagerly,

"Does the music I am playing suggest or convey anything to your mind?"

"Yes, sir," said Hetty, who was rapturously drinking in the beautiful music. "It reminds me of rain pattering upon the roofs, I can hear it rattling."

"Yes, said Dawlish, for he it was. "Yes, rain falling upon a mediæval German town. I am composing an opera."

Again he ran his fingers over the keys and the pattering changed to deep, rolling sounds.

"Listen," said the young man. "It is raining in the town, but out in the fields beyond the shepherd is waiting for the dainty shepherdess, but she doesn't come and the storm is brewing among the hills."

He moved his hands rapidly over the keys and the piano emitted sounds like the pealing of thunder among mountainous valleys. Gradually the music changed to soft, long-drawn notes.

"There," said the youthful composer. "The rain is ceasing, the sun is shining through the mist, and the anxious shepherd sees the shepherdess tripping towards him smilingly, her dainty figure silhouetted against the brilliant arch of the rainbow."

"It's very beautiful music, sir," said Hetty appreciatively.

"The *motif* is entrancing," said the young man, pushing his fingers through his hair.

Hetty had not the least idea what *motif* meant—but encouraged by his friendliness she said:

"When will the opera be given in public, sir?"

She was sorry she had asked the question almost before she had finished the sentence, for Mr. Dawlish's manner perceptibly saddened.

"Ah! when?" he said with a sigh. "That is what I should like to know."

Then for the first time he looked at Hetty.

"You are not the girl who generally attends me, are you?" he asked.

"Oh no, sir," said Hetty, "I'm the new girl."

"They change here so often," said the young man; "but I felt sure that I had never seen you before," and he bestowed an approving glance on Hetty. "With your calm, grave eyes, and your hair so neatly parted over your brow, you look like a Puritan maiden. Surely, your name must be Priscilla, and you have but recently stepped from off the *May Flower*."

"I'm sorry, sir, but my name isn't Priscilla."

"Then it's Phillis?" said the young man eagerly.

Hetty shook her head mournfully. She felt sorry to disappoint her new friend.

"My name is"—she began, but Dawlish interrupted her quickly by saying: "Don't,

oh don't tell me it's Eliza or Maria. I could not bear it."

"It's Hetty, sir, Hetty Marrington," she said slowly, wondering if her name would meet with his approval.

"Why, it's charming, my Puritan maid, you could not have done better. Hetty suggests wild roses, milk pails and new mown hay. You are no cockney I'll be bound. Perhaps you are a Scotch lassie? No. I have it now, you're Irish."

"My mother was Irish, sir," said Hetty, "but I was born in Kent."

"I knew you had Irish blood," said the young man triumphantly. "Your eyes are full of dreams and visions."

Hetty thought her interlocutor a very eccentric gentleman. Surely he was not wholly responsible.

Just as she had arrived at this conclusion the door opened, and Leybourne entered the room, having returned from his short visit to Verminster. The two men greeted each other effusively.

"I got back from Munich this morning," said Dawlish, "there I heard some delightful music, and you, old chap, how is the painting getting on?"

To this question Leybourne replied by stating that life was full of disappointments, and Art a hard task mistress.

"You look uncommonly well notwithstanding life's disappointments," said Dawlish. "In your absence," he continued, "I have been making acquaintance with this little Puritan maiden."

"Indeed," said Leybourne rather drily, and he sent Hetty off to get some tea.

When she had left the room he turned to his friend and said:

"I suppose you have been talking nonsense to that girl. You are not to do so."

"Hello, old chap, chippy?" questioned Dawlish. "She's a confoundedly pretty girl; where did *la Mère* Flanagan pick her up?"

Then Leybourne told his friend of his strange meeting with Hetty at the police court, and the case of mistaken identity, but of Hetty's history, as she had told it to him, he said nothing.

"The girl seemed so friendless that I thought I would give her a chance, but, of course, she is only here temporarily. She must get a permanent situation."

CHAPTER XXVI

UNE BELLE DAME

The melting voice through mazes running
Untwisting all the chain that tie
The hidden soul of harmony.

MILTON

WHILE Leybourne was speaking, Dawlish lighted a cigarette, and leaning back lazily in an easy-chair he sent clouds of smoke curling upwards. When his friend had finished his account of his meeting with Hetty, Dawlish looked towards the ceiling and observed:

"What ass said the age of chivalry is past, when dear old Don Quixote here has found a field for deeds of knight-errantry even in the police court? But, seriously, old boy," he said, turning to Leybourne, "you really ought to be a missionary and do rescue work. You have missed your vocation."

To this remark Leybourne replied briefly by informing his friend that he was an egregious ass. Dawlish's manner evinced no umbrage at this statement. When next he spoke, it was to ask with sympathetic interest if his friend had been painting any portraits recently. Whereupon the two men fell to discussing Art

and never even heard Hetty enter the room when she brought tea.

Hetty won golden opinions from the inmates at Gordon Square. Mrs. Flanagan opined that she was "real sensible." Mr. Flanagan paid a tribute to her sense by consulting her regarding his impending bets. Whenever he happened to meet Hetty he gave her tips from the *Sporting Oracle*, and indeed, volunteered to put a "bit" on for her if she cared to reserve some of her wages for such purpose. But Hetty had misgivings as to the wisdom of this. She had noticed that Mr. Flanagan's "dead certs" never came off, though she was too polite to comment on the fact.

As for Leybourne and Dawlish, since the advent of Hetty, they were conscious of an increase in their comforts; their meals were better cooked and better served. Mrs. Flanagan had relinquished the care of the studio to Hetty, with the result that it was tidier and brighter, and Leybourne could always put his hand on anything he required, which was *not* the case before she came, for, when the well-meaning Mrs. Flanagan did the dusting and sweeping, she had that exasperating habit, so common amongst her class, of placing pictures and sketches upside down.

Leybourne had, in the studio, a large screen very beautifully worked; it was given to him by his cousin Grace, and represented storks, on a satin ground, drinking in a pond. Grace

had come to the studio one winter day and declared that it was arctic, and that he must have a screen to shut out the draughts. The screen had arrived at Christmas, and was much prized by Leybourne. Now Mrs. Flanagan, greatly to Leybourne's annoyance, had invariably placed this valuable possession upside down so that the storks had their heads towards the water, while they seemed to execute strange acrobatic feats with their claws; but, since Hetty's arrival, the screen was always properly placed. She was not slow in seeing that, for some reason unknown to her, Leybourne valued the screen highly and therefore she took every care of it.

One day Dawlish came into the studio and found Hetty kneeling before it, needle in hand, with an expression of dismay depicted upon her countenance.

"What is the matter, Puritan maiden?" he asked. (He persisted in calling her Puritan Maiden.)

"Oh sir," said Hetty ruefully, "some one has torn this screen. I think it must have been that boy model that was here yesterday, he's so mischievous. Mr. Leybourne will be much annoyed, he values the screen greatly, so I am trying to mend it."

"Values it greatly, does he? It must have been given to him by some *belle dame*," Dawlish carelessly surmised.

"*Belle dame,*" repeated Hetty. "Please Sir, what may that be?"

"*Bonne amie,*" said Dawlish, smiling. "But a Puritan maiden mustn't know about *belles dames* and *bonnes amies,*" and taking up a folio of music from the piano he left the room.

"*Belle dame,* I wonder what that may mean," speculated Hetty, as she applied her needle to an infinitesimal darn on the surface of the screen. Later in the day she inquired of Mr. Flanagan, who had travelled much in France when he was a gentleman's gentleman, what *belle dame* meant. Mr. Flanagan, pleased at any opportunity of airing his French, replied with conscious pride, that *belle* meant beautiful and *dame* meant lady.

"So some beautiful lady gave him the screen," thought Hetty, and from that day she avoided looking at it.

Leybourne's studio was a pleasant, oblong room with a glass domed ceiling, which gave plenty of light for painting. The studio had a parquet floor on which two or three fur rugs were spread. There was little furniture save the Erard piano, of which Dawlish had taken possession. The young men were happy enough. Leybourne worked hard; Dawlish when inspiration moved him.

Hetty grew interested in their work and in their conversation. They discussed many subjects, as she waited upon them. Sometimes

Mr. Dawlish would recite the verses he himself had composed, or read aloud from the works of Keats or Shelley. Keats appealed to Hetty most, for, being a country girl, she had an inborn and passionate love of nature. Sometimes when Dawlish read she would hover round, making a pretext of dusting, but, in reality, hanging on his words, and listening to his melodious yet virile tones as he read "Endymion," with its lovely description of flowers, rustling foliage, and surging waters. A whole new world seemed to open magic portals to Hetty; the world of poetry, art and music, and her past life, with its sordid experiences, grew distant and blurred.

Leybourne lent her books to read in her spare moments. Some of the books he had enjoyed as a schoolboy, amongst others "Ivanhoe" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and what an impression these stories made upon her! She wept hot tears for the beautiful Eva and Uncle Tom, and her heart thrilled with indignation at the cruelty to which the negro slaves had been subjected. Then she felt so sorry for the dark eyed Rebecca. Poor Hetty! Her sympathy always went out to the unfortunate, to those from whom the joys of life were withheld.

CHAPTER XXVII

HETTY FINDS A PHOTOGRAPH

> To have the feelings of gentility, it is not necessary to have been born gentle—
>
> C. LAMB

MRS. FLANAGAN paid Hetty small wages, which Leybourne augmented by occasional gifts. He still talked of her going into service as a lady's maid, and paid for some lessons for her in hair-dressing, and Hetty, anxious to please him, became an efficient *coiffeuse*. Indeed, had she been a young *Parisienne*, her own pretty hair could not have been arranged more becomingly. Her taste in dress was instinctively correct, and the girl grew more attractive from day to day. Happiness had much to do with the improvement in her appearance. The only drawback to that happiness was that Mr. Leybourne said she was one day to leave Gordon Square and better herself by becoming a lady's maid. Oh! Why must this be! Why couldn't she go on living as she was? She did not ask herself the reason of her happiness. She carefully avoided any analysis of her feelings, she was anxious to improve herself, she deplored her neglected education. She often questioned

Dawlish about subjects on which she was ignorant, and in return for the information he imparted would sew buttons on his boots and repair his clothes. Dawlish, who was chronically hard up, would have liked to remunerate the girl for her services, but as his finances did not permit of this, he wrote a poem to the Puritan maiden, telling Hetty to treasure it carefully as there was money in it.

One day, as Hetty was tidying the studio, she had occasion to place some papers on Leybourne's desk, and in doing so let the blotter fall to the ground; on stooping to pick it up she saw that a photograph had slipped from between the leaves, and lay upturned upon the carpet. It was a portrait of Grace Verdale. She was photographed in a white gown of some clinging, gauzy material, a single row of large pearls encircled her slender throat. Hetty, as she carefully replaced the photograph in the blotter, wondered, with a strange pang at her heart, who the lady could be. She determined to ask Mrs. Flanagan whose likeness it was that she had thus unexpectedly come across. All day she was beset by thoughts of the portrait which obtruded themselves between her and her work. Curiosity conquered her and she finally broached the subject to Mrs. Flanagan.

"It is a photograph of Lady Grace Verdale," said Mrs. Flanagan, in answer to Hetty's indirect questions. "Mr. Leybourne always has

it by him, they are cousins and were brought up together."

"Cousins?" repeated Hetty. "Is she very beautiful?"

"She's accounted very good-looking," said Mrs. Flanagan, "but to my mind she's too frail and delicate, she looks as if a rough wind would blow her away. She's too 'wishy washy,' somehow, for my taste."

Hetty felt glad for reasons she did not care to analyse that Mrs. Flanagan considered Lady Grace "wishy washy." Then suddenly, ashamed of herself, she dismissed Lady Grace from her thoughts and went about her work. But that night, as she was preparing for bed, she examined her features long and carefully in the glass, holding the candle close to her face. She had let down her long hair which lay in two heavy plaits down her back. Youth and health were hers, and her long dark lashes cast a shadow on the roses which glowed upon her cheeks. Hetty for the first time rejoiced in her comeliness. No one could ever accuse her of being "wishy washy." She gave a sigh half of pleasure and half of sorrow, as she moved the candle towards her dimpled chin, and then, with a pang, recalled the haunting photograph of Lady Grace. The *spirituelle* expression of the face, and the willowy, ethereal figure had deeply impressed her. There was an indescribable charm about the picture, which she recognized, yet was unable

to define, and which was an air of fashion, race, and culture. With an impatient shrug, she moved away from the mirror. After all of what avail was her beauty. It had been but the source of misery to her, had attracted the unwelcome attentions of Miggens, and was responsible for her disastrous acquaintance with Slater. And Mr. Leybourne, what of him? Had he ever noticed she was good-looking? She thought not. Perhaps Mr. Dawlish had told him she was pretty, for he, at least, thought her so, of this she felt convinced. But at this moment a clock struck twelve, and Hetty undressed quickly, and blowing out the candle with a brusque movement indicative of irritation, went to bed to dream of Lady Grace Verdale.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WELCOME LETTERS

Dullest of dull-hued days.
THOMAS HARDY

THE summer months were hot and languorous and London was very close and stuffy. The pavements seemed on fire and the air was pregnant with the odour of petrol from the motor buses. Leybourne was constantly away on visits and was to join his cousin in Dresden at the close of September or the beginning of October. Dawlish had gone to Bayreuth, so that Hetty had little work. She missed the young men's cheery presence, their gay laughter, their comings and goings. She swept and dusted the studio, the key of which she now kept. How deserted it seemed! She took care of Thistle, Leybourne's Scotch terrier, which, his master said, was a dream of doghood, and which certainly had wonderfully soft, wistful eyes. Hetty was very fond of him and brushed and combed him every day, but, notwithstanding his companionship, for the first time in her life she found time hang heavy on her hands, and the heat of London was beginning to tell upon her.

"You are looking pale, Honey," said Mrs. Flanagan sympathetically one day, "and small wonder in this smoky town, but you mustn't lose your roses."

Then she gave a sigh and looked out of the kitchen window to see a traction engine pass by preceded by a perspiring individual waving a greasy, red flag.

"On days like this," said Mrs. Flanagan, "I long for a sight of the Old Country, the West of Ireland, where I was born."

She closed her eyes for a moment, and then said:

"Ah! dear me! How I wish I could feel the breezes I felt in my youth smelling of peat and the freshness of the sea. It's thirty years since I left home and yet I remember distinctly my father's thatched cottage on the hillside, with ricks of turf piled up against it, and the geese gabbling near the door, and beyond, the brown bog with the heather purple in the sunlight. Ah me! I don't know what's the matter with me that I should suddenly feel home sick. It's the hot weather that has set me dreaming. I'm thinking——"

While Mrs. Flanagan was still speaking the postman's knock was heard at the door, and this diverted her thoughts, which were drifting into gloomy channels.

"Go and see if there are any letters, Hetty," she said.

The girl obeyed and returned with two envelopes in her hand. Hetty had not resisted the temptation of glancing at the handwriting and had recognized that on one of the envelopes to be Leybourne's.

What an interminable time Mrs. Flanagan took to read the letter! She groped in a capacious pocket for her spectacles. When they were at last secured, she declared they were dim and had another search for her handkerchief. It took her quite five minutes to polish her glasses before she adjusted them.

"Goodness!" she exclaimed, when she had at last read one letter, "Mr. Leybourne's coming home this evening and will be wanting some dinner here, and there isn't a thing in the house."

She then turned her attention to the other letter which was from Dawlish, intimating that he also was returning home the same evening.

"Dear me! to be sure it never rains but it pours," said Mrs. Flanagan rather dolefully. "Not that I'm not glad to see the young gentlemen," she added, "but we could have done with one of them."

Hetty declared that she would put on her hat and run round to the butcher's, where she would buy some cutlets. Mrs. Flanagan might trust her to cook a nice little dinner.

She flew upstairs to put on her hat, singing gaily the while.

"That girl's worth her weight in gold," said Mrs. Flanagan addressing her husband, who had entered the kitchen, and seating himself on the most comfortable chair was opening the *Sporting Times*, and only grunted in acknowledgment of his wife's remark.

"To hear her singing," continued Mrs. Flanagan, still addressing her apathetic spouse, "you'd think she was a nightingale."

But this poetic simile was quite lost on Mr. Flanagan, who after twenty-five years of married life, as is customary with many husbands, did not even affect an interest in his wife's conversation. When he spoke it was to remark that he thought he'd look into the Cock and Wren and hear what were the odds on Auld Robin Grey for the St. Leger.

CHAPTER XXIX

A LUCULLIAN BANQUET

Good is an orchard the saint saith
To meditate on life and death,
With a cool well, a hive of bees,
A hermit's grot below the trees.

Good is an orchard, very good,
Though one should wear no monkish hood,
Right good, when Spring awakes her flute,
And good in yellowing time of fruit—

Very good in the grass to lie
And see the network 'gainst the sky
A living lace of blue and green,
And boughs that let the gold between.

KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON

WHEN Hetty returned she prepared an appetising little dinner (Mrs. Miggens' lessons in cooking had stood her in good stead), consisting of a dish of tender cutlets, and an omelette, which any *cordon bleu* would have found difficult to rival. Mr. Dawlish had stopped on his way from the station to buy a bottle of Burgundy. Hetty's dinner was daintily served on the cleanest and glossiest cloth in Mrs. Flanagan's possession, and a bowl of late sweet peas ornamented and scented the table. She had bought the flowers from the lame man at the corner

of the Square. The young men, rendered hungry by a long journey, enjoyed their meal immensely. Good food and good wine promoted and stimulated conversation, to which Hetty listened as she served dinner. How pleasant it was, after her long spell of dulness, once more to enjoy the wit and gaiety of these two intellectuals, and to have them home again! How well Mr. Leybourne was looking, bronzed becomingly by summer suns!

"Well, Puritan maiden," Dawlish said, "you have served us a Lucullian banquet, but how has the world been treating you? You look run down, as if you wanted a day in the country. I tell you what," he said, turning to Leybourne, "a friend has lent me his motor while he is out of town. We'll spin right into the country and have a picnic and bring Hetty as our *chef*. The long day in the open air will do her good. I know a delightful Surrey orchard where we can lunch, and where some of my best verses have been inspired. You'll bring your easel and brushes, I'll bring a pencil, and Hetty will bring the coffee apparatus to brew us some coffee. Her coffee will stimulate to great achievements. We will have a day out," declared Mr. Dawlish, "just like when we were students in Paris. *Cela vous sourit, n'est-ce pas, mon cher?* Hurrah! for our outing," exclaimed Dawlish enthusiastically, breaking into the vernacular. "You'll come, Puritan maid, won't you?"

Hetty flushed with pleasure and said she would, if Mrs. Flanagan would grant her permission. After some little demur, Mrs. Flanagan gave her consent. She felt she could trust the young men, who were honest and straightforward if unconventional, "and indeed," she added to herself, "the girl looks pale, and young people want some amusement occasionally." So the good woman helped Hetty to cook the lunch for the picnic which was to take place the very next day. It was close on twelve o'clock when the preparations were concluded and Hetty went to bed, but not to sleep; she was so excited by the prospect of a long spin into the country.

CHAPTER XXX

HETTY'S PICTURE

Bliss was it that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!
WORDSWORTH

THE next morning Hetty was awake when the first rays of the sun came dancing into her room. She sprang out of bed, and going to the window pulled up the blind. It was a delicious September day, not the tiniest cloud dimmed the blueness of the sky, and yet there was the invigorating freshness of autumn in the air. Hetty stood looking into the street which still showed little signs of life. She remained thus some time, rejoicing that the day should prove so kind for the excursion to which she was looking forward so much. Slowly the street began to manifest divers signs of life. The neighbour's dog appeared to take his matutinal walk in the Square, and soon began to prowl about the bushes in hopes of finding a cat, which he might chivvy. His appearance was followed by that of a housemaid, who stood yawning on the next-door step, broom in hand. Then the sound of the milk boy's can was heard, indicating clearly that it was time for Hetty to dress, which she did

with more than usual care. She brushed out her long hair until all the pretty golden shades reflected the sunshine. Humming, she ran downstairs to eat her breakfast, and to pack the picnic basket with cold chicken, hard boiled eggs, a bottle of red wine, and last, but not least, the coffee apparatus.

By nine o'clock the motor was at the door. Dawlish was the driver, Leybourne sat next him in front; Hetty and the picnic hamper were in the body of the car.

The streets were still fairly empty, the traffic of the day had not yet begun, so that there was little to impede speed; Hetty felt as if she were being carried on wings through the air. It was an ideal day for motoring. A shower during the night had laid the dust and the September sun was shining brightly, but discreetly not scorchingly. They soon left London behind them and turned into Richmond Park, where Hetty had never been before. How delightful was the rapid motion and how lovely the park looked stretched out on every side. Hetty felt so light-hearted and her expression was so animated, that when Mr. Dawlish turned to her to point out the deer, busy browsing, he responsively shared in her enjoyment.

"What lovely ferns," she exclaimed, as she pointed to a tangle of bracken.

"Would you like to get some?" said Dawlish good-naturedly.

Hetty was delighted with the idea. The motor was stopped and soon her hands were filled with the long ferns. She had gathered some vivid green ones, and some which had already turned to gold.

Leybourne lighted a cigarette and smoked, and waited while Dawlish watched Hetty, and pointed out where the longest ferns grew.

When Leybourne's cigarette was consumed, he was anxious to be off once more and exclaimed impatiently :

" Hetty, you avaricious little Vandal, do you mean to strip the park of all its autumn glory and get us into trouble with the keeper ? Come, let us be off."

They then resumed their journey. They had arranged to lunch about forty miles from London, in an orchard attached to a farm-house. Dawlish knew the owner of the farm, in whose house they could boil a kettle.

When they reached their destination, the young men declared they were famished, and must have lunch without delay. They assisted Hetty to spread the cloth under a gnarled apple tree, whose venerable trunk was covered with moss and lichen, and soon they were doing ample justice to the viands Hetty had brought. Not until they were finished could the girl be induced to eat, and when the repast was concluded she went to the farm-house in search of boiling water with which to make coffee.

As she disappeared between the trees, Leybourne laid down his cigarette to remark that it was an entire disregard of the social conventions to bring Hetty out motoring in a Panhard car.

"Bah! what does it matter what the Philistines think," said Dawlish contemptuously.

"I dare say I am snobby, but I shouldn't wish to meet any of my relations," Leybourne remarked.

"I should thoroughly enjoy meeting mine," said Dawlish. "They are dull and narrow and it gives me acute pleasure to *epater le bourgeois*."

The young men relapsed into silence as Hetty reappeared among the branches, and soon the fragrance of coffee and Turkish cigarettes mingled with the scent of long grasses and late flowers.

When Dawlish had drunk his coffee, he said that he was deliciously stimulated, and felt capable of achieving sublime and imperishable verse, but for the wooing of the muses, a few moments of *recueillement* were required, so he stretched himself upon the ground and tilted his cap over his eyes. From the strange sounds which proceeded from underneath the cap, Leybourne judged his friend to be asleep, but Dawlish's siesta was interrupted by a rude shake:

"What is the matter? can't you let a fellow sleep?" said Dawlish irritably.

But all the reply to this remark was a command to wake up quickly, accompanied by another shake.

"Hurry up and fetch my easel and canvas," said Leybourne impatiently. "I feel that I am going to paint a great picture. Look at Hetty, what an admirable pose! I must get her on canvas."

Dawlish slowly looked across to where Hetty was standing opposite, under an apple tree, covered with Devonshire pippins, and glowing with colour; the sunlight filtering through the branches, fell upon her hair; her cheeks were becomingly flushed from the motor drive, her eyes sparkled with pleasure and the joy of youth and health. She had thrown aside her coat, and her hat hung upon a convenient bough, which served as a peg. Her white blouse and simple black skirt emphasized the lines of her lissom figure, which was supple as a switch.

"Don't move, Hetty, for goodness' sake," Leybourne commanded, "I'm going to sketch you."

Dawlish brought charcoals and canvas from the motor, and in a few minutes Leybourne had set to work. Dawlish, standing by, watched his friend as he made a few masterly strokes on the canvas.

"Yes, Hetty ought to make a pretty picture," said Dawlish thoughtfully. "It often

struck me as odd," he continued, "that you never seemed to notice what a pretty girl she is."

"Pretty girl, pretty picture," exclaimed Leybourne impatiently, "what nonsense you talk. Who wants a pretty picture? The word suggests some horrid, insipid, simpering banality. Above all my picture must be life-like. People must say, when looking at it, not what a pretty girl, but that girl *lives*."

"Well for all that, you needn't pounce on a fellow," said Dawlish, crestfallen. "Anyhow you must admit that Hetty is pretty."

But Leybourne, engrossed in his work, ignored the remark, and when he again spoke it was to entreat Hetty not to stir for the love of heaven.

The girl, thus admonished, stood valiantly.

"Leybourne, I believe you have eyes for nothing but your Art," said Dawlish musingly.

As this remark elicited no response, he seated himself upon the grass, lighted a cigarette, and, while smoking, composed a little sonnet which he entitled, "Love among the apples." He wrote down the lines on the back of an envelope with a stylographic pen, and then, dissatisfied with them, destroyed the envelope on which he had also unfortunately written the address of the people with whom he was to dine next night, and which he vainly tried to recall, while Leybourne painted at white heat all the time.

It was not until Hetty's face showed unmistakable signs of weariness that he was compelled to cease painting. The girl must have been standing nearly two hours save for the few short intervals for repose which he had grudgingly accorded her. When she was at last released, he knew that he had painted better than he had ever done before. He had laid the foundation-stone to fame. He was delighted with his work and gazed again and again at the picture. Hetty had never before seen him in such a state of exhilaration and excitement. Very reluctantly he put aside his brushes and palette, leaving his canvas to dry for a while before putting it into the motor.

The sunset was gilding the sky and the shadows of the trees began to lengthen, before the motor set out on its homeward journey, the precious picture being consigned to Hetty's care, with many injunctions that she was to guard it from being rubbed.

When they reached home it was quite dark, and a delightful day was over for Hetty, but she did not regret it. It was but the precursor of many such days, for had not Leybourne said she must sit to him daily until the picture was finished. She was enchanted at the prospect. It was delightful to feel that if the picture was to be a success the artist in some measure owed that success to the cheerfulness and patience of his model.

Occupied with these thoughts, she arranged with great care the ferns she had brought home in a vase on her narrow mantelpiece, where they would meet her eyes first thing on awaking in the morning, and remind her of the day which had passed so delightfully.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE LAST SITTING

Comme Buonarotti le peintre gigantesque
Ils ne peuvent plus voir que les choses d'en haut,
Et que le ciel de marbre où leur front touche presque.
Sublime aveuglement ! magnifique défaut.

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

DAY after day Hetty sat to Leybourne, who lingered lovingly over his work. Though the picture seemed to the girl entirely completed, he frequently required another sitting, "just to put a few finishing touches to his masterpiece," he said. He had every reason to be pleased with the painting. It was remarkably good, and that expression of honest candour so peculiar to Hetty was portrayed with life-like precision.

She had suggested that Leybourne should not introduce her hands into the picture, because they were needle pricked and hard worked, but he said :

"I like your hands, they are characteristic, shapely little hands roughened by honest work. I don't want to paint a country girl under an apple tree, with the white soft hands of an indolent Court beauty, such as Lely painted."

She was pleased that he approved of her hands. How delightful those days were! How enormously she enjoyed the brief intervals of repose which he accorded her, and which he beguiled by cheery anecdote or amusing conversation. Pleased with himself and his work he was at his best.

Sometimes, to Hetty's chagrin, the sittings would be interrupted by visitors, for it had been bruited in artistic circles that Leybourne's picture was exceptionally good and critics and even dealers came to see it.

People began to speak of Leybourne as a creative genius, who had given a new vision of Art: his work was devoid of any subterfuge, it was simple and sincere. His painting of Hetty was conspicuous by its candour and its absence of all striving after effect. He had painted her as he had seen her under the apple tree, modest and simple, and had disdained to enhance her attractions by any tricks of painting. With wonderful fidelity he had caught the effect of the sun light filtering through the branches and falling aslant on the girl's rippling hair.

One day a fashionable portrait painter paid a visit to the studio. He was a man of rotund figure with bold roving eyes; these he fixed admiringly on Hetty, who instinctively disliked him; she felt that he was jealous of Leybourne, and indeed the great man would have most thoroughly enjoyed disparaging the picture

had his conscience as an artist so permitted him. As it was he praised it grudgingly. Then, directing an all enfolding glance at Hetty, he said to Leybourne.

"You paint excellently, my dear friend, but you have not flattered your model."

"I hope not," said Leybourne curtly, "I am not a fashionable portrait painter."

The great man winced and flushed slightly, but again looking at Hetty, he remarked to Leybourne.

"You must confess you have been singularly lucky in your model, which is indeed inspiring. I wish, my dear," he continued, addressing Hetty, "that you would sit to me one day; that is, of course, when our friend here has finished painting your picture and you are at liberty."

Hetty directed an appealing glance at Leybourne which unfortunately the portrait painter intercepted. He put his own construction on it.

Leybourne, seeing Hetty's embarrassment, said rather shortly that Hetty was not an ordinary model, she was in his landlady's service and had kindly consented to sit for him.

"I understand, I quite understand," said the great man with a malicious chuckle. "You have"—he hesitated as if casting in his mind for a word, "'the exclusive copyright,' as the publishers say."

At this remark Leybourne's countenance

indicated that it would have afforded him very considerable pleasure to have kicked his friend downstairs. The portrait painter, seeing he had gone far enough, made a pretence of consulting a heavy gold watch with armorial bearing, and then said:

"I congratulate you on your painting and I wish I could tarry longer in your pleasant society, but I have an appointment with the Duchess of Wurster, whom I am painting, and so wish you and your little friend *adieu*."

With this parting shot the great man took his departure.

A few days later Hetty received a letter, written on primrose coloured paper with crest and monogram, which contained the request that she should sit to the portrait painter. He promised her a substantial sum should she consent to do so. To this she wrote a curt little note in reply saying she had not the necessary time.

Towards the close of September, Leybourne was obliged to admit that the picture was finished: he could not further improve it.

"Well, Hetty," he said one day at the end of the sitting, "your task has drawn to a close. Your picture is finished. I feel I can never thank you enough for your patience in sitting for all those long hours."

Leybourne would have liked to have given her some substantial proof of his gratitude, but

somehow he felt that such an offering would be disagreeable to her, and might be lacking in delicacy.

Hetty flushed with pleasure at his words.

"Don't thank me, sir," she said, "I was only too happy to be of use to you. When I think of all you have done for me I feel I can never be sufficiently grateful to you."

"You mean about the police court," said Leybourne. "Anyone would have done the same."

"Indeed, sir, few would have behaved as you did," said Hetty eagerly.

Her eyes were lifted to his face, overflowing with gratitude and devotion, and there was some emotion other than gratitude, suggested by her glance, that made Leybourne for the moment ponder and that set a strange idea flashing through his mind. Then, ashamed of entertaining such a thought, he mentally designated himself a vain coxcomb. The idea was incredible. When he spoke after some minutes' silence he said:

"This is your last sitting, Hetty. I go to Dresden next week."

Hetty made no remark for some seconds, then she said in tones that seemed strange to herself:

"Isn't it very sudden, sir?"

"What?" said Leybourne cheerily. He had not noticed the thrill in her voice. "What

is sudden? My trip to Dresden? Oh no, it has been arranged for some time past. You'll tell the Flanagans to see that my things are packed."

"Yes, sir," said Hetty, feeling very miserable.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE SISTINE MADONNA

All women love great men
If young or old.
R. Browning

One fine morning, a week later, at the close of September, two ladies were breakfasting on the terrace of the Hotel Bellevue at Dresden, which overlooks the Elbe. It was one of those delicious, warm days, such as we sometimes get at the end of autumn. Days when it seems as if summer, loath to make her adieux, seeks to console and compensate the earth for her inevitable farewell, by the warmth and ardour of her last lingering embrace. The two ladies on the terrace, Lady Verminster and her daughter, were enjoying the lovely morning. The broad bosomed Elbe was dotted with steamers and pleasure boats, full of holiday makers, intent on pleasure. Grace Verdale had finished breakfast, her eyes rested idly upon the river, in her hand she held a letter. Lady Verminster was drinking coffee out of a very heavy china cup, which she put down from time to time to glance at the *Morning Post* of the week before. Presently Lady Grace remarked:

"Is it not delightful, mamma, being able to have breakfast out of doors so late in the year? Fancy it is now nearly October."

"It is pleasant," admitted Lady Verminster, "but I doubt if it is wise."

"Why, how so, mamma?" inquired Lady Grace.

"After a severe cure, such as I have undergone at Gastein, one cannot be too careful. The warm douches and the waters render one susceptible to cold."

"But it is almost too warm to-day," said Lady Grace.

"There is always more or less of a damp mist rising from the river," said Lady Verminster apprehensively.

Grace glanced at the Elbe, upon which the sun's rays were quite obviously dancing, and thought that the mist must be invisible. However, she remained silent, and Lady Verminster, helping herself to some coffee, continued:

"I do wish the Germans did not make their china so clumsy and heavy. I suffered much from neuritis in my right arm last night and I ascribe it solely to the lifting up of these heavy cups. I really fear I must have my arm massaged."

At this juncture Lady Verdale caught sight of the letter in Grace's hand and asked:

"From whom is your letter Grace?"

"From Frank, he says we may expect him any day now——"

"Indeed! Well, you will enjoy having him here to go over the gallery with you. Has he any news?"

"He writes that he has painted a picture, which has made quite a sensation. He has sent me some newspaper cuttings which you might like to read," and Grace handed the cuttings to her mother.

These Lady Verminster scanned through her lorgnette.

"Frank is to be felicitated," she said, "nothing could be more flattering. I always had the highest opinion of his talents as an artist and predicted his success. Don't you remember my prophecy at Verminster years ago?"

Grace remembered nothing of the sort, she remained discreetly silent.

Presently Lady Verminster asked:

"How do you intend to pass the morning, Grace?"

"I thought of spending an hour or so among the pictures," said Grace.

"Very well, dear, but take Mason with you. I don't think you ought to wander through picture galleries alone."

"Oh, mamma, must I take Mason with me?" protested Lady Grace. "She would spoil my morning, she would be miserable in a picture

gallery and would wonder the whole time if I was going to have her late for lunch. She told me the other day that she liked her 'meals regular,' that she felt a sinking when she had passed her hour. No, the gallery is not to be thought of in the companionship of Mason," said Lady Grace, as she thought of her staid English maid, who said she did not hold with foreigners.

"Dear mamma," pleaded Lady Grace, "may I go alone? I am not in the least likely to meet anybody I know——"

"Well, I don't approve of young women going about alone," said Lady Verminster, who held many early Victorian views, "but it is true that you are not likely to meet anyone you know, so do as you wish. I must now be off to write some letters."

When Lady Verminster had disappeared, Lady Grace tarried a few minutes longer, sunning herself on the terrace, then she too turned indoors to make herself ready for going out.

A few minutes later she was in the Dresden Gallery. Already she knew it well and required neither guide nor catalogue. She moved from picture to picture as inspired by mood or fancy. Sometimes she studied the people about her. All amused and interested her, after the dulness and seclusion of Verminster. Over the way an American family, consisting of a stout *pater-familias* and an opulent looking lady, heavily

veiled in what seemed to be a flounce of Brussels net, with their amazingly attired daughter, yawned in chorus before Ribera's *St. Agnes*, while an intelligent and Art loving courier extolled the excellence of the early Spanish School. Then a girls' school filed through, marshalled by a weary-looking mistress. One of the pupils exchanged glances with an artist, who was copying a painting by Titian. She was reprimanded by the mistress and giggled saucily.

Grace was amused, and smiled as she moved on to the room where Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* is enshrined in solitary state. It was still early. The gallery was, comparatively speaking, empty, so that she had no difficulty in finding room on the bench opposite the picture. She seated herself next a German workman who had snatched a few moments during the morning to rest his body and elevate his mind by contemplating Art. Presently Grace heard her own name spoken and looking towards the entrance was pleasantly surprised at seeing Frank Leybourne.

"I arrived this morning," he said, when he had responded to her greeting.

"I only received your letter this morning," said Grace.

"I travelled with it, I suppose," answered Leybourne. "I gave it to old Flanagan, who probably forgot to post it in time."

Grace whispered her congratulations to Leybourne upon his picture and eagerly questioned him about it, expressing a desire to see it.

Leybourne said he had had the picture photographed for her, the photograph was among his things at his hotel in the town.

"Of course, Frank, I was delighted at the success of your picture, indeed you can't imagine how pleased I am."

"Dear Grace, the picture is altogether yours, it was painted for you. I trust that it may help towards realizing my dreams. I hope Lady Verminster is pleased."

As he spoke, he laid his hand gently over hers, which lay upon her knee.

"Mother is really very fond of you, Frank," she said. "Only this very morning she told me, quite seriously, that she had always predicted your success."

This remark evoked a loud, cheery laugh from Leybourne, which sounded quite sacrilegious in that Holy of Holies—the Tabernacle of the Dresden Gallery, where the *Sistine Madonna* is enshrined. The rude sound caused two spectacled, Art loving German ladies to exclaim——

"*Diese Engländer haben eigentümliche Manieren sie sollten sich doch schämen vor einem solchen Kunstwerke su plappern.*"

Grace, hearing the remark, as it was intended she should, pointed out to Frank the crime he had committed by saying:

"It is quite unpardonable to speak here. See, we have outraged the artistic susceptibilities of those dear old ladies."

"Nevertheless," laughed Frank, "the *Sistine Madonna* is not in the least offended. See, she is following us with her smiling glance, as if to say 'Bless you, my children, be happy!'"

CHAPTER XXXIII

AN IMMORTAL DAY

. . . . her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me.

BROWNING

WHEN Frank presented himself at the Hotel Bellevue, to pay his respects to Lady Verminster, she received him very cordially.

"My dear Frank," she said, "I hear that your picture has created quite a *furore*. I have always taken a maternal interest in you and am naturally delighted."

Frank, seeing that she was so favourably inclined towards him, proposed that she and Grace should celebrate the success of the picture by dining with him at the big restaurant on the Bruhl Terrace, which invitation Lady Verminster was graciously pleased to accept, much to Frank's delight.

He said he would call for the ladies and escort them to the restaurant. He was punctual to his appointment, and at half-past seven o'clock the three wended their way along the Bruhl Terrace, which strolling-place presented an animated appearance peopled by town folk out for an evening airing, whispering

lovers and soldiers, splendid in the gay uniform of Saxony, while here and there on the benches which stud the terrace a workman and his wife sat resting after their day's toil, enjoying the fresh cool breezes which blew from the Elbe, while their children played around, their shrill voices and gay laughter borne far on the evening air.

When Leybourne and his guests reached the restaurant they found it gaily garlanded and festooned with great pink paper roses, petals of orange blossom and *confetti*, which attested that a wedding-party had recently been there.

"I believe these decorations are in your honour, Frank," said Grace, "and your fame has already travelled to Germany. How does it feel to be famous?" she asked.

"Lady Verminster," said Frank with a comic expression, "your daughter is laughing at me. Alas! the waiter informed me that a wedding took place here to-day. A very elegant party," he said, "the *Bräutigam* being no less a personage than the *Freiherr von Hausen-sachenfelsdachenberg*, who condescended to link his destiny with an American oil king's daughter."

Frank had chosen a table in one of the windows that looked upon the Elbe, which was now darkening in the twilight. Inside the shaded electric light made a cheerful contrast to the blackness of the river and shed a

warm radiance in the spacious room, causing the artificial roses to look surprisingly natural.

"A very bower of roses," Lady Verminster remarked.

A tactful, well-mannered waiter ministered to their wants and assisted Frank in choosing delectable dishes.

When dinner was over, Frank produced the photograph of his picture for Grace's inspection. She examined the photograph with the deepest interest. Then, after a pause, said quite simply:

"It could not be better Frank," and these few words, so sincerely spoken, were more grateful to Frank's ears than all the extravagant praise of the newspapers and Art critics.

Then Lady Verminster took the photograph, and looking at it, said:

"The original of this picture must be a pretty girl, she has a very steadfast, sincere expression."

As Lady Verminster spoke, Grace shot a swift glance at Frank, whose manner did not betray the slightest confusion. He was regarding his *chef d' œuvre* with frank, almost boyish pleasure.

"Hetty is an awfully good sort," he said, "she put up with me wonderfully, and stood for hours at a stretch. I fear I was a pitiless taskmaster, but I was determined that the picture should be a success. The thought of you, Grace, inspired me to work resolutely, and

if I have succeeded in making a good thing of Hetty, to you be all the honour and glory of execution and inspiration." (Alas! Poor Hetty!)

Lady Verdale, who had not heard Frank's whispered confidences, here interposed with the remark:

"Artists always flatter."

She expressed a hope that Hetty would not have her head turned and that she would not give herself airs.

The tactful waiter, who had been observing Lady Verminster for some time, here presented her with a Court Circular and a paper entitled *Paul Pry Partout.* In addition to being tactful this man was furthermore *simpatico* and romantic as all true Germans are. He was therefore anxious to procure a few quiet moments for a couple so obviously interested in each other as were Frank and Grace. Seeing die *gnädige Frau Mama* absorbed in the papers, he chuckled to himself, "*Cerberus* is busy with the sop." He had profited by the excellent education with which the Fatherland had provided him, and was well versed in the fables of mythology.

For a time, Lady Verdale read aloud items which she considered of interest for her daughter's benefit.

"How these Winnington-Thompsons push," she remarked. "Fancy, Grace, royalty was actually present at their ball."

"I am so pleased, Mamma," exclaimed Lady Grace.

"Pleased at what, Grace?" Lady Verminster sternly inquired.

"Pleased that royalty patronized the Winnington-Thompsons, because it must have given them acute pleasure, and I like to think that people do get a few moments happiness in this vale of tears."

Lady Verminster did not reply to this remark, but glanced with an odd expression at her daughter before resuming the description of the Winnington-Thompson function——

Presently her head nodded over the paper. The excellent dinner she had enjoyed so much had made her drowsy.

Frank and Grace moved to the window recess, and while they watched the Elbe turn silver under the magic of the moonlight, talked over many things.

"And now Grace," said Frank, "I want an answer to the question I asked you five years ago. This time I trust my fate will not depend upon Lady Verminster's consent."

"I think it unlikely that mamma will refuse to give her consent now, she must see we have remained true to each other all these years. But should she still be obdurate, Frank, why then—well I shall only have to tell her that my mind is irrevocably made up."

"That's a dear, brave girl," said Frank, as he folded her, for an instant, in his arms.

The restaurant was now empty save for the discreet waiter, who had his back to them and was busy making out the bill. So by the moonlit Elbe they pledged their vows while the stars winked and twinkled in the clear sky.

When the clock struck ten the kindly waiter was anxious to put the lights out. "What late hours these English keep," he reflected, and coughed loudly, thus rousing Lady Verminster, who declared it was time to be getting home.

The three walked along the now almost deserted Bruhl Terrace to the Hotel Bellevue. The glorious moon was lending a green-gold sheen to everything its beams caressed. Lady Verminster and Frank conversed gaily on their way home. Grace, however, was silent, rejoicing in her love and in the splendour of the night. The moonlight caught her hair and eyes.

"Surely," thought Frank, "she is the perfection of all sweetness."

When they reached the hotel, Grace paused at the threshold, and looking towards the Opera House and Zwinger, all luminous in the moonlight, murmured, "Dear Dresden."

"Dear, dear Dresden," echoed Frank as he held Grace's hand lingeringly. "It has given me one immortal day."

When the ladies turned indoors, Frank, with

a reckless prodigality born of happiness, flung a half sovereign to the yawning *concierge*, who made a profound obeisance, and a mental reflection that the English were a mad and thriftless nation.

CHAPTER XXXIV

SLATER AGAIN

Escape me ?
Never,
Beloved !
While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth.

BROWNING

ONE dusty day in mid October Hetty was sent by Mrs. Flanagan to post some letters in the pillar-box at the corner of the Square. The equinoctial gales had set in and a strong wind blew the dust high and caused the fallen leaves to pirouette. Hetty, while making frantic efforts to keep on her hat, cannoned into a man who had just turned the corner.

"I beg your pardon," she gasped, as she recoiled from the force of the collision, still keeping her hand to her unsteady headgear.

"You ! 'Etty ! " exclaimed the voice of Slater in surprise, for he it was. He continued jubilantly, "to think of me looking for you everywhere and you to turn up so sudden."

To Hetty the encounter was a rude shock, she stood overwhelmed—unresponsive.

"Well 'Etty, 'aven't you anything to say to

me ?" demanded Slater. "Where are you living now ?"

Whilst Slater was speaking Hetty was rapidly revolving in her mind how she could best keep her whereabouts concealed from him. She hesitated for a moment and then said evasively :

"I'm at present in a situation."

"Well, service is poor work when you could be enjoying a nice 'ome of your own."

Hetty was silent, and Slater, following the train of his thoughts, asked :

"How was it that you clean vanished, I allus thought that gal Emma was at the bottom of your disappearance."

Hetty briefly related the circumstances connected with her cruel experience in the police court, but made no mention of Leybourne's name.

"It was real mean and shabby of Emma," said Slater, when Hetty had finished speaking, "but now that we have found each other by the dispensation o' Providence, as I may say, you'll come 'ome with me ? My feelings towards you 'ave never changed, no they 'aven't—You'll come 'ome along with me, won't you ?"

"No, that I won't," said Hetty stoutly. "You deceived me. There's no need to go back upon that ; but I'm now happy in a good situation with kind people, and there I'll stay !"

"Who are you with ?" asked Slater, his suspicions aroused.

Without replying to this question, Hetty accelerated her steps. "I must be getting back," she said. Slater also quickened his pace. "He must not discover where I live," thought Hetty, walking on in the opposite direction to her home.

Slater kept by her side holding out inducements for her to return to him.

"I shall allus think of you as my wife," he said. "I'm real fond of you and 'ave a mortal need of you." Then, seeing that he was making no impression upon Hetty by his protestations of affection, he changed his tactics. "I'm earning twice what I used," he said. "There's no need for you to do any work. You can be quite the lidy and 'ave your own servant gal to lord it over."

But even this prospect failed to appeal to Hetty.

"Is there anyone else?" asked Slater suddenly. "Are you keeping company?"

"I don't know what you mean?" said Hetty indignantly.

Slater looked relieved.

"Well then, if there's no one else why not come back to me?"

"You seem to forget that your wife is alive and that your proposal is an insult," remarked Hetty coldly.

"No, there you're wrong," said Slater eagerly, "she died three months back. I 'ave her death

certificate, so 'elp me God, I mean honourable by you this time, 'Etty."

"This is dreadful," thought Hetty, as she looked at the man. His coarseness and roughness were ingrained, he revolted her, she wondered how she could ever have tolerated his presence. He wore a red tie and a high, ill-fitting collar, his features were quivering from emotion. She resolved that Leybourne must never see him. What was she to do to rid herself of Slater? She must resort to strategy. She gave a hurried glance round. A bus was nearing the corner of the street; suddenly she conceived a brilliant idea. Pulling out her handkerchief she made a pretence of using it, then relaxing her hold she contrived so that the wind lifted it out of her hand. Down the street it fluttered and frolicked, frisking right merrily in the gale.

"There goes my handkerchief," exclaimed Hetty. "Oh, do get it for me."

As Slater started in pursuit, a gust of wind caught his hat. Away it blew with many somersaults, it raced the handkerchief, which was now about sixty yards down the street in front of Hetty. Slater had his back turned to her. She looked round, the bus had stopped at the corner. She crossed the street at a run and in another moment she was jolted away.

When Slater, with the assistance of a friendly scavenger, at last succeeded in capturing hat

and handkerchief and breathlessly retraced his steps to his starting-point, it was to find that Hetty had vanished.

"Dash it, she has given me the slip," he exclaimed, as he stuffed the handkerchief angrily into his pocket.

CHAPTER XXXV

DAY-DREAMS

" I thought love had been a joyous thing," quoth my Uncle Toby—" 'Tis the most serious and, please your Honour (sometimes), that is in the world."

STERNE

WHEN Hetty reached home after an absence of over an hour, she was met by Mrs. Flanagan, who expressed surprise at her prolonged absence.

" Where have you been all this time, Hetty ? Surely it does not take an hour to post a couple of letters ? " asked Mrs. Flanagan somewhat sternly.

" I met a fri—— some one I knew," said Hetty shortly, and vouchsafing no further explanation went upstairs saying that she must take off her outdoor things.

Having gained the solitude of her own room, she hastily divested herself of her boots, threw her hat upon the table, and flinging herself upon her bed began to think over what had just happened. A host of disagreeable thoughts and apprehensions beset her. Her meeting with Slater had brought all the misery of the past vividly before her. How she had rejoiced at her escape from her former life ! To Mr.

Leybourne she owed her present freedom. It was he who had loosened the fetters which must have eventually dragged her downwards. To him she owed her mental development. How noble, kind and generous he was and how she loved him! Yes, she loved him, it was useless to disguise the fact longer from herself, and now, for the first time, she ruthlessly gauged the inmost depths of her heart. She asked herself when did she not love Leybourne. It seemed to her that from the moment he had rescued her from disgrace and imprisonment she had loved him. Her eyes filled with tears at the thought of her unavailing love, which must always be secret and silent. "It's almost an impertinence for me to think of him as I do," she thought, and was angry with herself and upbraided herself for it. "Hetty, you are a silly little fool," she exclaimed bitterly. "Are you mad? Have you no pride? He has never given you a thought, why should he? You poor, common little girl. You shabby little household drudge."

Here her thoughts took another direction. She recalled Leybourne's conversations with her and how he had unconsciously captivated her, poor little grey moth, whose wings had expanded in the sunshine of kindness. He had seemed interested in her when she sat for her picture. "But no, it was not in me, it was in his painting," she thought. "I was only necessary to his work, yet how delightful those

sittings were," and again she yielded to the thought that she loved him. She gloried in her misplaced affection. Were it but possible to reverse their positions! Her imagination took wings, and she built castles in the air, in which she and Leybourne played the principal parts. He was poor, she was rich, and a very great lady who recognized his talent as "a painter."

Then, again, they were shipwrecked on some lonely tropical island, where the sun shone perpetually and flowers were immortal, and where birds of brilliant plumage poured forth their joyous songs. Amid these surroundings Hetty saw herself and Leybourne contentedly leading the lives of primitive men and women, freed from all tiresome social conventions.

Hetty could not forbear a smile at the absurdity of the vision she had thus conjured up. Nevertheless, her fanciful imagining brought yet another picture before her mental vision. She seemed to see a long winding road before her. High above were the blue heavens, Leybourne was a poor hawker selling matches, she trudged by his side an outcast, yet happier than any queen. She let her imagination have full sway. Now he lay upon a sick bed. He had been ill, she had nursed him back to life, the crisis was over, he opened his eyes, they fell upon her, pale from her long vigils; he called her softly by her name, told her that he loved her, she felt his arms about her and his kiss upon

her cheek. When she had arrived at this stage in her castle building she recognized to what extravagant lengths her imagination had led her. "What a fool I am," she murmured, "I daresay he never gives me a thought; nevertheless, should such be the case, I love him. I haven't the least little bit of pride left. Yes I have though, I am proud of an affection which is not unworthy. What is my love, she thought, but a recognition of what is good and noble? I shall never love anybody else. No—not if I were to live for a thousand years."

Then her mind again reverted to her unfortunate meeting with Slater. For the moment she had escaped him, but she felt convinced that he would pursue, importune, and persecute her. She would keep the meeting secret. She could not bear that Mr. Leybourne should see him. True Mr. Leybourne knew about her past, but apparently he had put it away from him. The appearance of Slater would resuscitate it. He must not find her again: she would keep indoors for a while and thus perhaps she might avoid him. When her self-communing had reached this stage a voice called out impatiently.

"Hetty, Hetty, where are you, girl? Mr. Dawlish has been ringing for tea."

The poor have no privacy. Hetty heard steps on the stairs, another moment and Mrs. Flanagan would be in her room. She sprang to the door, and steadying her voice called out: "Coming."

Then she hurried to the washstand and immersed her face in a basin of cold water. Her ablutions completed—she passed a brush over her hair and flew downstairs.

"Hetty, what a time you have been," Mrs. Flanagan remarked.

Then her glance fell upon the girl's face and her voice grew gentle.

"Your eyes are red, child," she said; "have you been crying?"

Hetty murmured something vague about her conflict with the smarting wind as she prepared a tray for Mr. Dawlish's tea.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A PROPOSAL

Life is too short for any distant aim
And cold the dull reward of future fame.
LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

THINGS had been going badly with Dawlish. The music publisher would have none of his opera, it was returned to him, and in consequence he was gloomy and dejected, and tried to forget his disappointment in a senseless round of dissipation.

He stayed in bed most of the day, and at night attended music-halls and masqued balls, reeling home in the small hours of the morning. In spite of himself, however, his artistic nature reasserted itself. The reaction was at hand, and Dawlish grew disgusted with himself. His disheartenment was profound, he lacked courage to send his opera to another publisher lest he might meet with a further disappointment.

One morning he rose about twelve, and dressed listlessly. It was a dark, gloomy day and the view of the London chimney pots from the studio window was not cheerful or inspiring. He could not get a verse of a French song he had heard the night before out of his mind. He

kept humming it hoarsely, in gloomy accents, with almost savage vindictiveness. How he hated the song and yet how the verses ran in his head! He went on singing them in melancholy accents.

"*Quoi? c'est Marie que je revois,*" he wailed.

"*Comme cette rencontre m'enchante,*
Il y aura bientôt un an mechant,
Depuis que nous avons rompu,
je crois."

Here he interrupted himself to exclaim, "Curse the song, how does it run?" And then he began again, if possible, in more lugubrious accents.

"*Dieu! Que vous me semblez embellir. Depuis les temps de nos amours-de nos amours—de nos amours*—Oh? hang it—*Vous n'étiez pas aussi jolie, quand je vous voyais tous les jours.*"

He stopped singing to exclaim, "these late hours don't suit me," and rang the bell impatiently.

Hetty answered it.

"Good morning, Puritan maiden," he said, addressing her. "Excuse the obvious, but it is a dark and gloomy morning, as doubtless you perceive. My spirits are at zero. I have no spirit left, therefore I must pour spirits in, so, like a good, amiable Puritan maiden, fetch me a brandy and soda. By George! I have a thirst, my tongue is like a seal jacket, and my head aches infernally."

Hetty stood for a moment, without making any effort to carry out his orders. Then she said:

"Your head will ache still more, sir, if you have brandy and soda. Let me bring you some nice hot coffee instead."

Dawlish looked at Hetty for a moment, surprised at the boldness of her suggestion, which for a second he rather resented, but he was essentially *bon enfant* and remarked:

"Well, be it coffee, Puritan maiden, since you so will."

Hetty had experienced nothing but kindness from Dawlish and had been of late much troubled at his manner of life. She was sorry to see him so cut up about the rejection of his opera. She went downstairs and returned in a few minutes with some strong coffee. Dawlish's spirits revived as he drank it and his headache departed. Hetty poked the fire into a cheerful blaze and established a little order in the room.

"Now, sir," she said, "I'm sure your head is better?"

"It is, you witch. I believe you have driven it away by the black arts."

She was glad to see him once more his own bantering self. Dawlish continued, "Hetty I suppose you are right. I have indulged in too many hot and rebellious liquors, as the poet puts it. In plain English I've been having too many brandies and sodas."

"Far too many, sir," said Hetty demurely.

"I've been going it a bit," Dawlish admitted, "but exceptional natures have exceptional weaknesses, as may be gathered from the lives of the Saints, or, indeed, from the lives of the Poets. For instance, look at Baudelaire and Verlaine. No wonder they sought oblivion in drugs from the cruelty and neglect of an ungenerous public."

"I know nothing about Baudelaire nor Verlaine, sir," said Hetty, "but, sir, I shouldn't follow their example."

"No, you wouldn't Puritan maid. You wouldn't," said Dawlish with a hearty laugh.

Hetty, seeing that his good-humour had been restored, moved towards the piano and opened it invitingly, but unfortunately in so doing her hand slipped; she touched the keys.

"Stop that accursed sound," said Dawlish. "I wish I had never loved music or wooed the muses. Why was I born a victim to these profitless aspirations, this splendid discontent? Oh! to be a smug clerk employed by the gas company or a tax collector, with a bicycle and a house at Tooting with a plaster Orpheus in the fanlight, or, better still, to be a clerk in a bank totting up figures in measureless content."

"I think, sir, *you* would find totting up figures dull work, sir," said Hetty, "you ought to persevere and send your opera to another publisher.

Mr. Leybourne says that good work will always succeed in the end."

"It's all very well for Leybourne to talk," said Dawlish, "he has some money to fall back upon. I have nothing. My mother is badly off, and although a distinguished writer says that we should not be ashamed to live on our mothers, somehow I don't quite like doing it. I wish I were a steady fellow and could stand rebuffs. Perhaps, Hetty, if you were to marry me you might keep me straight. Marry me! I haven't any money but I have a rich uncle who hates me, but he hasn't any other relations, and I am of a good family."

He put his hand in his pocket and, drawing half a sovereign and some pence from it, he said. "That's all I have at present. I see you don't care to have me."

Hetty burst out laughing at the strangeness of the proposal.

"You are only making game of me, sir," she said.

"Never more serious in my life," said Dawlish emphatically.

"Oh, sir," laughed Hetty, "I couldn't marry you, it would never do.

"Too late," said Dawlish. "Somebody else, I suppose. Well, if that is the case, forget what I have said this morning, at any rate I have amused you."

He walked to the piano as he spoke, and softly

played a bar of his opera. Hetty, knowing that he would quickly forget all about her now that he was busy with his music, stole from the room and heard Dawlish playing the whole day.

"He's back again at work," she thought, with satisfaction.

CHAPTER XXXVII

DAWLISH JOINS THE PHILISTINES

Celui est homme de bien, qui est homme de biens.
FRENCH PROVERB

THE autumn changed to winter, and Hetty saw nothing of Leybourne.

He had lingered weeks at Dresden with Lady Verminster and Lady Grace, and then gone on to Paris with them. In December, however, he stayed a week at Gordon Square. He informed Hetty that he intended spending Christmas with some relations, and would not return to London until after New Year's day. He seemed in excellent spirits. Of his engagement Hetty had heard nothing, for, although Lady Verminster had practically given her consent, she wished it to be kept secret. The day before Leybourne went into the country for the Christmas holidays he sent for Hetty, who found him in the studio, surrounded with canvases, and bending over a large packing case.

"Hetty," he said, without looking up as she entered the studio, "you must take great care of these pictures for me. I am collecting all my paintings, as in February I am holding an exhibition of my pictures. Your portrait will

be exhibited. It will be the gem of the collection. You'll have to go to see yourself hanging on the walls."

Hetty replied that she would make a point of doing so, and Leybourne went on to say :

"You see that I was not idle when away," and he showed her some sketches of Dresden and Paris. He was pleased with his work, taking almost a boyish pleasure in it. He had the artist's capacity for enthusiasm.

Hetty ventured on a few questions regarding the places he had sketched, and he recounted the history attached to each. Hetty said she thought Dresden must be a delightful place. Leybourne had the gift of investing any place or subject of which he spoke with interest for his hearers.

"Well, Hetty," he said, "who knows ? You may some day see Dresden, and even Paris and Rome."

He smiled gaily as he spoke. A smile full of cryptic meaning, for Lady Grace had planned taking Hetty into her service as maid on her marriage. Hetty flushed with pleasure at the remark.

"And now," said Leybourne, "I must be off. I leave you custodian of the studio. Here is a sovereign for a Christmas box and remember to order a hamper at my expense at the Grocer's. I want you and Mrs. Flanagan to have a cheery

Christmas," he said. "Go to Drury Lane and see the pantomime."

"Oh, sir, you are too kind," said Hetty, but Leybourne did not wish to be thanked and hurried away.

Christmas passed very quietly for Hetty Mrs. Flanagan took her to the Oratory to hear the *Adeste Fideles* sung. Hetty delighted in the music and the beautiful decorations. In the afternoon she took a bus to St. Paul's and heard the great organ. She enjoyed her drive in the cold, crisp air. She had grown to love London, and recognized its strange, sombre, melancholy charm—a charm so peculiarly its own that it renders its beauty wholly different from that of any other great city. She loved the grey buildings so often wrapped in a drapery of fog, and she took pleasure in the broad thoroughfares and in the narrow streets, where, at nightfall, naphtha flares illuminate the booths and whelk barrows of the costers—above all she loved the glorious pageant of the sky when the sun sets in gold and crimson over the toiling city.

One day Mrs. Flanagan took her to Madame Tussaud's, a place which filled her with amazement and alarm. The Chamber of Horrors was terrifying, and Mrs. Flanagan enjoyed its gruesomeness, and told her many thrilling and blood-curdling stories of the murderers.

On the evening of Boxing Day Mr. Dawlish,

who had been spending Christmas in Paris (he said he could not endure it in England), returned to Gordon Square to find a pile of letters awaiting his arrival.

"What a pyramid of letters!" he exclaimed.

"This time of year, sir, the post is very heavy," Hetty remarked. "I suppose they are Christmas cards, sir?"

"Duns more likely," said Dawlish impatiently.

He took up some of the letters which were unmistakably bills, and tossed them into the grate. When he came to the last letter, he suddenly made up his mind to open it. While reading, Hetty noticed that he turned visibly pale:

"Great Scott," he exclaimed when he had finished reading, "my old uncle, Sir Richard Dawlish, died intestate, and I am a Baronet and his sole heir. Hetty give me your hand and congratulate me."

"I do congratulate you most heartily, sir," said Hetty, giving him her hand, which he seized, and, dragging her after him, executed a sort of impromptu war-dance round the studio. He was in a wild exuberance of spirits. "I am a handsome fellow, Hetty," he said, "ain't I? Remember that a Bart. with twenty thousand a year is always a handsome man. I am a good fellow too, yes. You think so? Yes, I shall be really appreciated now that I have twenty thousand a year to back me up. I shall join

the Philistines. Take off my hat to the Muses, compose no more music, but take a box at the Opera instead and sit between South African millionaires. I shall develop a corporation, drink port, eat several courses at dinner and," he wound up dramatically, "be lost to Art. From to-day Dick Dawlish, the poet, is lost to Art, dead and buried, but Sir Richard Dawlish lives."

He went on for a time in extravagant terms, improvising a eulogistic funeral oration for the dead poet, until Hetty interrupted his outburst by remarking:

"Sir, you can now, if you wish, publish your opera at your own expense."

"That is true, I never thought of that," said Dawlish. "But enough about music for the present, I must send my old mother a telegram. She has wept so often over me that it is but fair that she should now rejoice with me. The telegram sent, I shall order a table at Ritz's where I have never dined at my own expense. I wish old Leybourne were here to dine with me." So saying he seized his hat and dashed out, banging the hall door loudly after him.

Later in the day Hetty received a parcel from a jewellers, containing a bracelet, much too fine for her to wear, and Dawlish did not forget Mrs. Flanagan, who was the proud recipient of a magnificent album, in which she placed photographs of exceedingly weird-looking people,

for the most part wearing crinolines and pork-pie hats.

Dawlish kept on his rooms at Mrs. Flanagan's, generously increasing the rent, but he rarely ever came to stay at Gordon Square, though he often paid Leybourne a visit in the Studio.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

GRACE VISITS THE STUDIO

C'est aimer froidement que
N'être point jaloux.

MOLIÈRE

IN February Leybourne returned to London. He was very busy arranging for the exhibition of his pictures. Hetty helped him to pack them: she was even present at the exhibition room in Bond Street, while they were being hung, helping, directing and seeing that Leybourne's orders were carefully executed. These were very happy days for her. Leybourne was constantly looking in at the gallery and Hetty was delighted to be of use to him. He had now many orders for pictures. Fashionable women came to the studio to be painted. Hetty often helped Leybourne to arrange their draperies and sometimes served tea or coffee. No one thought it strange that Leybourne should have such a pretty girl in attendance. To look at both their frank, pleasant faces was quite sufficient immediately to dismiss any suspicions as regarded their relationship. Hetty soon became a favourite at the studio and her coffee was quite an institution. Artists and fashion-

able ladies came to discuss coffee and pictures with Leybourne.

One day, as Hetty was leaving the studio, which she had been putting to rights after a sitting (Leybourne did not permit anyone to put his things in order save her), a lady entered the room. Hetty at first thought the visitor must have come to have her portrait painted, and wondered who she could be. The face was familiar to her. It suddenly flashed upon her that this was the lady she had seen outside Marshall and Snelgrove's shop on the day of her trying experience at the police court, and whom Hetty had admired for her kindness to a beggar. Then, with a pang at her heart, she recognized the lady as the original of the portrait she had seen on Leybourne's desk. The visitor was fashionably and becomingly dressed, her brown gown was trimmed with sable furs, she carried a large bunch of violets and daffodils in her hand. She stood looking very kindly at Hetty, who was inclined to regard this unconventional entrance to the studio as an intrusion. The lady seemed to guess Hetty's thoughts and said:

"Perhaps I ought to explain my presence here. I am Mr. Leybourne's cousin, Lady Grace Verdale," and still looking at Hetty with the same disarming smile she said, "And you are Hetty Marrington. I recognized you instantly from your picture. I have heard so

much of you," as she spoke she glanced round. "How much more comfortable the studio is," she said, "I am sure you arranged it?"

Hetty acknowledged that she did. She felt a fierce undefinable feeling tugging at her heart-strings, could it be jealousy?

"Is my cousin in?" asked Lady Grace.

Hetty replied in the negative and added that she thought Mr. Leybourne had gone to see after the exhibition of his pictures.

"Oh, I am sorry to miss him," said Lady Grace. There was a ring of disappointment in her voice as she continued, "We ran up to town unexpectedly and I thought I would pay him a surprise visit. I have brought him some real country flowers from Verminster. Let us arrange them. Do ask Mrs. Flanagan for some vases."

"She is making herself very much at home," thought Hetty as she went downstairs on her errand. "How handsome she is, and how beautifully dressed and how I should like to hate her and I can't. Of course she's in love with Mr. Frank, a baby could see that, but then who wouldn't be? I wonder, though, if he is in love with her. But after all why should it concern me?" she asked herself sharply. "Why, indeed," she repeated, "as I don't count."

She brought the vases into the studio. Lady Grace had slipped off her gloves and her slim

white hands were busy among the daffodils. In a few minutes she had dexterously arranged the flowers.

"The room breathes of Spring," she said smilingly. "The purple and yellow make a contrast. I hope Mr. Leybourne will be pleased."

Then drawing on her gloves she said, "I shall now go to the exhibition of paintings where perhaps I shall find him. In the meantime should he come in tell him that we are at Grosvenor Square until Wednesday, and that I expect him to come round and see me without delay. He has to take me to a play to-night. I wonder if Mr. Flanagan would call a taxi for me?" she added.

Mr. Flanagan for a wonder did so, and Lady Grace, nodding pleasantly to Hetty, drove away to the exhibition leaving Hetty looking very thoughtful.

CHAPTER XXXIX

AN EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

> And paint man whatever the issue!
> Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
> New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters
> To bring the invisible full into play!
> Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?
>
> R. Browning

In a few minutes Lady Grace was in the gallery where Leybourne's pictures were on view, but Leybourne was not there, so she bought a catalogue and began an inspection of the pictures, some of which were already familiar to her. She was gratified to notice that many were already sold as the red seal testified. There were views of Dresden, portraits, and in the centre hung Leybourne's masterpiece, Hetty's portrait.

"How wonderfully he painted that girl," thought Grace. "The colour, the attitude is splendid, but isn't her expression a little too joyous in the painting? I thought her rather pensive-looking."

Grace took a chair and sat before the picture. There were not many in the room and they were the sort of persons one generally sees at such exhibitions. One or two men who, Grace fancied,

were collectors, a country clergyman, and a stout lady seated on a settee in the middle of the room. She was evidently tired out from shopping, and nibbled biscuits which she drew from a string wrist-bag. In a far corner, quite oblivious of the pictures, were a couple who had evidently arranged a rendezvous. They talked in whispers and sometimes interspersed the conversation with stifled laughter. Grace smiled as she remembered that Leybourne used to say that as far as he could see the only use people made of picture galleries was to keep appointments in them.

Suddenly her attention was attracted to an individual, clad in the garb of a workman. Had she been abroad she would not have been surprised, but as it was she was astonished, as the British artizan rarely possesses artistic tastes. The man took a hasty survey of the gallery, he seemed to be seeking somebody or something. Then his eyes fell upon the portrait of Hetty. Quickly placing himself before it, he scrutinized it closely, taking in every detail of the picture. He inspected the corners to see if it were signed, but the signature was so indistinct that he could not read it. Turning from the picture to a table covered with green baize at which a man sat selling catalogues, he said, possessing himself of one :

" 'Ow much, guv'nor ? "

Throwing down sixpence, he turned over the

pages rapidly until he came to No. 67, "Among the Apples," by Frank Leybourne. Then, apparently satisfied, he gave one last look at the picture and hurriedly left the gallery.

Grace had watched him closely, surprised that paintings should interest a man of so rough a stamp. He was neatly dressed and wore a showy tie. She noticed that the eyes were very closely set in a sensual face. Just as she was thinking of leaving the gallery, Leybourne entered, so they lingered there a while longer, and then made their way to Claridge's to have tea. As they walked there Grace said:

"The exhibition is really very interesting. Indeed, your paintings seem to appeal even to the British workman, for I saw a man, evidently a mechanic, stand for quite a considerable time before Hetty's picture."

"That is indeed strange," said Leybourne with a laugh, "I did not think that the British artizan was a lover of art."

CHAPTER XL

AN UNPLEASANT MEETING

> The blight of low desires—darkening their own
> To thine own likeness.
>
> TENNYSON

FOR some days after Lady Grace's visit to Leybourne's studio Mrs. Flanagan, who was deeply attached to the Verdale family, was loud in her praise of Lady Grace, whom it would seem the worthy landlady never saw looking better or happier. She had quite a bright colour, and Mrs. Flanagan wondered if her ladyship and Mr. Frank would make a match of it. "It's likely enough," she opined, "they would make a handsome couple."

"How some women's heads always run on matchmaking. There's nothing whatever between Mr. Frank and Lady Grace but of your making," said Mr. Flanagan, who happened to be present when these remarks were made, and, therefore, took the opportunity of disagreeing with his spouse. Indeed, he was always careful to dissent from every opinion expressed by her. "Don't you be setting gossip about," he continued. Mrs. Flanagan, however, was not paying any attention to her husband's injunctions.

She was busy gazing out of the window and bid Hetty do likewise, saying :

"There's that man again looking up here. I've seen him several times this past week."

Hetty peeped cautiously from behind the curtain and saw Slater watching the house. She withdrew from the window quickly. So he had discovered her whereabouts ! She wondered if he would ring the bell and ask for her, but no ring came. When she again ventured to look out Slater had vanished. Hetty felt much upset by this occurrence. She did not sleep that night and for several days stayed indoors. A week passed before she ventured out, during which time she saw no sign of Slater. Feeling reassured, she took Thistle for a stroll one evening. Leybourne was spending the day in the country with an artist friend, and the dog, looking very disconsolate without his master, was whimpering and cocking his ears expectantly at every stir. He missed his daily scamper, and the wistful appealing eyes which he turned first to Hetty, and then towards the door, moved the girl to compassion.

"Yes, Thistle," she said, "you shall have your walk. I'll take you round the square, but no farther." She put on her hat as she spoke, the dog watching her eagerly the while. When she was ready he gave a series of bounds and joyful yaps; he quite understood that she was going out to please him.

They were proceeding gaily down the square when all of a sudden Hetty heard footsteps behind her. She knew that some one was following her, and her heart sank, she hardly dared look round. At last when she had summoned up sufficient courage to do so, she saw Slater as she had expected. She looked at him for a moment and then walked on quickly. In another second he had joined her and was walking alongside of her. He was very pale and his look was sinister.

"So, Hetty," he said, "this is the way you treat an old pal, and no very nice way either, but I quite understand, now that you 'ave got among toffs and real swagger hartist chaps, you 'ave no use for him that was a friend to you when you wanted one. Oh! I quite understand," he fiercely repeated, "what with private views and hexhibitions and the rest of it you don't care to be reminded of old times, that you don't."

Hetty flushed angrily, yet she felt there was some truth in what he said. She did wish to consign to the lumber room of memory her life with him. Turning to him she asked:

"What do you want of me?"

"I want a little kindness of you," said Slater, "a little consideration for my feeling, that's wot I want of you as is my wife. Seems I'm not a-going to get it though," he added. He bitterly resented that Hetty should be happy

and well-dressed without any pecuniary assistance from him. He recognized the fact that he was nothing to her, and that she was a thousand times prettier than when first he met her.

"What I want of you, indeed," he said, reverting to her question; "why, you're my wife, and I want you back, that's wot it comes to. The parson married us right enough."

"Yes, but your wife was alive and I'll never, never go back to you."

"Got more comfortable quarters with the hartist, eh?" said Slater rudely.

Hetty's cheeks flamed with indignation.

"Don't you mention his name," she exclaimed. "You are not fit to tie his bootlaces."

Then the anger in her voice changed to despair.

"How did you find me?" she wailed, barely knowing what she said.

"'Aven't I been on the look out for you for months past?" said Slater. "One day as I 'appened to be near Bond Street, my attention was caught by some prints o' pictures that were placarded outside a gallery. They kind o' took my fancy, when sudden-like one caught my eye. It was called 'Girl among the Apples.' I hadn't been looking at it half a second when I exclaimed, 'Lor', if that isn't Hetty Marrington!' I paid down a shilling and went into the gallery and learned as 'ow the picture was painted by one, Leybourne. I found his address in the address book. 'E's your sweetheart, I suppose?"

"How dare you speak to me so," said Hetty, but she changed colour, which Slater noticed.

"I'm right," he thought to himself. "'Etty," he pleaded, "come back to me. That fellow will never care for you as I do; when he grows tired o' you he'll chuck you the same as he would an old glove."

Hetty resented his remarks.

"Look here," she said, "if you don't leave me I shall speak to that policeman at the corner."

"You're cruel 'ard, 'Etty," said Slater, "Well, I'll go, but think o' what I 'ave said to you and come back to me." So saying, Slater turned away, leaving Hetty to no very pleasant reflections.

CHAPTER XLI

HETTY GOES TO VERMINSTER

Partir c'est mourir un peu.
LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

ONE day as Hetty, who had been putting the studio to rights, was preparing to leave the room, Leybourne entered.

"Stay, Hetty," he said, "I have a letter here that concerns you."

He drew an envelope from his pocket. "This letter," he continued, "is from Lady Grace Verdale. Some time ago she told me that her maid was going on a long holiday, and that she would require another immediately. I suggested that she should give you a trial. She now writes to say that she will do so. It is a very good opening for you, Hetty. Her present maid leaves shortly for good, and you, if you give satisfaction, can step into her shoes. The wages are exceptionally good, treble what you have here."

Leybourne smiled pleasantly at Hetty, expecting her to rejoice at her good fortune, but Hetty wore no responsive smile. On the contrary she looked singularly downcast.

Leybourne glanced at her in surprise. He

deemed her ungrateful and felt slightly impatient with her.

"Come, Hetty," he said, "are you not pleased? You have every reason to be so."

Hetty still remained silent. A big tear-drop fell from her eyes on to the parquet floor, where it glistened in the sunlight like a diamond.

"Hetty! you absurd little girl; what is the matter?" asked Leybourne not unkindly but still impatiently. "You ought to be delighted at your good fortune."

"Oh, sir, don't think me ungrateful," said Hetty, struggling not to let her tears get the better of her, "but I am so sorry to leave you, and Mr. Dawlish and Mrs. Flanagan and—and—Thistle, and even Mr. Flanagan. I have been so happy here."

"My dear child," said Leybourne gently, "you are only going to leave me for a little while, just for the present and to better yourself! I should be wanting in my duty towards you if I did not see that you were comfortably provided for; you need not be in the least shy going into a strange place. Everybody will be kind to you. So pack up your things and be off to-morrow."

Leybourne attributed Hetty's reluctance to shyness.

"But who will look after you, sir, and the studio if I go?" asked Hetty protestingly.

"Why, Mrs. Flanagan of course. I have

just told her to engage another girl until you return."

Hetty seeing that further parley was useless, left the room to seek Mrs. Flanagan.

"I shall miss you, honey," said Mrs. Flanagan, "but you ought to be delighted. You are far too pretty a girl to be buried here. Verminster is a fine place and there are lots of keepers and gardeners. With your looks you ought to be able to secure a good husband and a comfortable home for yourself."

"Oh!" moaned Hetty protestingly, as she went upstairs to pack her clothes.

The next day Mrs. Flanagan escorted her to the station, and she was soon speeding on her way through the Midlands to Verminster.

CHAPTER XLII

HETTY ENTERS UPON NEW DUTIES

Mon âme a son secret, ma vie a son mystère
Un amour éternel en un moment conçu
Le mal est sans espoir, aussi j'ai dû le taire
Et celle qui l'a fait n'en a jamais rien su.

SAINTE BEUVE

WHEN Hetty reached Verminster Station she was met by a car driven by a smart-looking groom, who asked her if she were Miss Marrington and where her box was. Having secured the trunk, he bade her sit beside him and drove her to Verminster Manor. Hetty felt a tremendous sense of loneliness as the great gates closed after her. She was conducted to the servants' hall and presented to the housekeeper, who passed her on to Mrs. Tibbets, Lady Verminster's maid, who promised to instruct Hetty in her new duties and show her what she called Lady Grace's *garde robe*. Mrs. Tibbets was clad in funereal black; she wore a jet brooch and an obviously false dark fringe, and a handkerchief with a deep mourning border protruded itself coquettishly from her bodice. She explained that she was in mourning for her brother, a Wesleyan minister, who had succumbed to an operation

for appendicitis. She laid particular stress upon the word appendicitis, which she seemed to think conferred upon her a sort of social status.

Hetty followed Mrs. Tibbets upstairs and was shown Lady Grace's room, and a bewildering amount of gowns and blouses.

"When we are dining alone," said Mrs. Tibbets (including herself in the household as if she were royalty), "her ladyship generally wears her *vieux rose* tea gown *demi-montant*."

Mrs. Tibbets quite enjoyed mystifying Hetty as she initiated her into the mysteries of the toilette.

"Yes," said Hetty, not liking to display her ignorance, although she had not the vaguest notion of what *demi-montant* meant.

Mrs. Tibbets did not trouble herself to give her much information, and as the girl was standing perplexed surrounded by a pile of gowns, the door was opened, and Lady Grace entered the room. She wished Hetty good day, and thanked her for coming so speedily. She was simple and kind, and so anxious to put Hetty at her ease that the girl's shyness quickly vanished, and she felt infinitely more at home with her new mistress than she did with the redoubtable Mrs. Tibbets.

Hetty assisted Lady Grace to dress for dinner, and when she had gone downstairs looked

curiously round the luxuriously furnished apartment. How pretty it was with all the silver-topped bottles and costly toilet accessories which adorned the Sheraton dressing-table. On the mantelpiece were photos of numerous friends and relations and one of Leybourne himself, which Hetty examined with great interest. She felt more than ever convinced that Lady Grace was in love with him, but wondered very much if he reciprocated her affection. Hetty had noticed how indifferent he was to the fashionable women who thronged his studio, many of whom used every artifice and device to captivate him. Perhaps he was alike indifferent to Lady Grace, and yet Hetty felt that she would not be likely to resort to any artifice to win him.

Hetty, though treated kindly at Verminster, often longed for Gordon Square. Her duties were comparatively speaking light, but it seemed to her that a vast amount of unnecessary time was passed in changing her mistress's gowns. Hetty was confused by this frequent change of toilet, and though Lady Grace was very patient with her, Mrs. Tibbets was often cross and ill-humoured at any little mistake. On these occasions her mistress showed great kindness and made every allowance. She confided to Hetty that she also was a little afraid of Mrs. Tibbets, but asked her not to give her away as *au fond* Mrs. Tibbets was really an excellent

creature whom she would not hurt for the world.

The sharing of this little secret helped Hetty to feel more at home with her mistress, and established a feeling of confidence between them.

CHAPTER XLIII

HETTY MEETS HER FATHER

Dying, we live
Fretless and free.
R. Browning

One fine morning Lady Grace said to Hetty ;

"This afternoon I intend driving over to the Convent of Les Dames Françaises and I will take you with me."

She went on to explain that some nuns that had been expelled from France had established themselves near Verminster. They took in laundry work, and had started a school and a hospital.

"I often go over the hospital," said Lady Grace; "where old people and consumptives are received.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, they drove to the convent in the pony chaise with a hamper of good things for the patients. On reaching the convent, Lady Grace deputed Hetty to distribute the fruit and jellies they had brought, while she herself consulted with the Reverend Mother on some business.

Hetty was handed over to a bright-eyed little nun of whom she felt very shy and with whom

she did not dare venture into conversation, supposing her to be a foreigner. Sister Margaret Mary, it transpired, was no French woman, but an Irish girl born in Galway, to which fact her delightful brogue bore testimony. She told Hetty that she had been in France as a nursery governess and had there entered a convent.

Hetty, encouraged by this information, quickly found her tongue and told the sister that she was a mongrel, as her mother had been Irish, so that a friendly footing was quickly established between Hetty and the bright-eyed little sister who acted as guide.

"It is really three convents," said the nun. "See, we have built it on the model of the Maison Mère, which building, alas! no longer exists in France. The large building in the centre of the convent contains the dormitories, refectory, and chapel. The left wing is the orphanage and the right the hospital. First, we will go and see the chapel."

Hetty had never been in a convent before and was much impressed by the scrupulous cleanliness and order as she walked upon the highly polished beeswaxed floor. It was all very strange and new to her.

On her way to the chapel through the long corridor she met Sœur Gabrielle, to whom she was introduced by Sister Margaret Mary, who effected the introduction in excellent French.

The English of Sœur Gabrielle was limited, but she managed to say that she was charmed to meet Hetty, and was glad to hear that she was half Irish, as a warm sympathy existed between "*ce malheureux pays et la France.*"

Then Sister Margaret Mary, showed Hetty over the chapel, which the latter thought perfectly lovely, especially the altar, all aglow with lighted candles, and decorated with tall majestic lilies, which grew in the sisters' garden.

Sister Margaret Mary, who had the gift of putting people at their ease, and Hetty were soon chatting away. She told Sister Margaret Mary that her mother had been a Catholic, and that she herself had been baptized one.

"Well, you were brought here by the Divine Providence," said the sister. "You must come to our services often; Lady Grace is one of our regular attendants. Now I shall take you over the hospital. I am in charge of the consumptive ward."

Hetty went over the hospital with Sister Margaret Mary, who had taken quite a fancy to her.

"There is the theatre where the operations take place," said the nun. "We had a poor man here this morning whose leg had to be amputated."

"Oh! but you didn't see anything so painful?" Hetty asked anxiously.

"Yes, I had to be there," said the sister.

"It was my turn. There is always a trained nurse in attendance, but the patients like to have a sister by. It gives them a feeling of confidence."

"Weren't you very frightened, sister?" asked Hetty, who was getting interested.

"No, do you know I wasn't," replied the sister.

"Surely you used to be at first, sister?"

"Not even at first," said the nun, smiling. As she spoke she put a hand with a silver ring on the third finger into her pocket and drew forth a letter.

"I received this from a friend this morning," she said. "Listen to this paragraph," and she read aloud.—"'Dear sister, I am so glad that you are happy in your vocation. I was so interested in your description of those wonderful operations of which you wrote me in your last letter. Fancy, Sister Margaret Mary being such a brave woman. Little Miss Lennon, whom I knew in Galway, would have fainted at the sight of a harmless field mouse!' I was Miss Lennon," said the nun with a little sigh. "It seems a very long time ago. But here we are at the consumptive ward."

In the ward there were only a few patients. One man was reading a newspaper in front of the fire, a second was busy writing a letter, while a third was looking out of the window, his back turned towards Hetty.

"They are always very cheerful here," whispered the nun. "Optimism is one of the *traits* of this dreadful disease. That man looking out of the window is very far gone, he can't last much longer, but he is always planning for the future." Then turning to the patients, she raised her voice to say:

"Lady Grace Verdale has sent you some grapes and oranges."

As the nun spoke the man who was standing at the window looking wistfully at the first chilly snowdrops that were showing themselves above ground, turned round, and Hetty recognized her father worn and emaciated by disease. His thin cheeks had a hectic flush and his eyes were unnaturally bright. He looked at Hetty for some moments without recognizing her. It was difficult to associate the girl who had left Ivy Farm little more than a child with the bright healthy-looking young woman before him who was simply and tastefully clad.

"Father, don't you know me?" Hetty exclaimed.

"Surely you are not my girl, Hetty? Why, yes," he exclaimed, "and grown into a lady since I saw you."

The nun now retired discreetly to talk with the other patients at the far end of the ward, and Hetty and her father were left together.

"A lady?" said Hetty in reply to her father's remark. "Oh no! but I have at last found

good friends. I had a great deal of trouble when first I left the farm. And you, father, how do you come to be here and where is your wife ? "

" In prison. We had a deal of trouble when the farm was sold up. We went to London where we started a small greengrocer's shop. Well, nothing we touched throve. Your stepmother gave herself completely over to drink, and I followed her example. When our last penny was spent she forged a customer's name on a cheque, she got the money right enough, but afterwards the fraud was discovered. She was arrested and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. All my ill-luck was due to my second marriage," he said with petulance.

Hetty could not express any regret at her stepmother's fate. Instead of so doing she again inquired of her father how he came to be in the hospital.

" Well," he said, " after I left London I came to the Midlands to get a situation as a farm labourer. London never agreed with me, my lungs got affected, I had a bad chill and coughed and coughed. Then I heard of this hospital and thought I should like to come among Catholics again. Your own mother was one. So here I am and very kind I have been treated too, but I hope to be out and about again when the Spring is over. Spring is always a trying time."

Hetty looked sadly at her father, who seemed exhausted with speaking, and drew his breath with strange wheezings. He asked her some questions about herself, but grew too weak to pay much attention to her answers.

"I wasn't a good father to you," he said, "and I ought to have been for your mother's sake. However, things seem to have gone well with you. You have grown very handsome," he said approvingly, "and look like a lady. I heard your mother tell that she had some strain of gentle blood, not that I ever gave much heed to such talk."

Here he began to cough alarmingly, beads of perspiration broke out upon his forehead. The nun hurried towards him with a glass and Hetty wiped his brow. When the fit of coughing had subsided Sister Margaret Mary said:

"I must take your daughter away from you, Mr. Marrington; you are quite tired out."

The man made no objection.

"Be sure you come again, Hetty," he said feebly.

"Yes, father," said Hetty, as she impressed a kiss upon his forehead.

She left the ward with the nun, who expressed astonishment at the meeting. Hetty asked if the case was quite hopeless.

"I fear so," said the nun gently.

"You know that he was a victim to alcohol and that makes his chance less. One lung is

quite gone, but he has every care and is quite happy. He had evinced the most excellent disposition."

With the knowledge that her father was well looked after, Hetty had to be content.

When she returned to the *salle de reception* she found Lady Grace waiting for her. Hetty murmured excuses, but Lady Grace said that she had had a most enjoyable chat with the Reverend Mother.

On the way home, Hetty recounted her meeting with her father. Lady Grace told her that she must often go to see him. The housekeeper would give her jellies and broth to bring him. So it came about that Hetty was a frequent visitor at the convent of Les Dames Françaises, where she made friends with the nuns and was adored by the children of the orphanage.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE IRONY OF FATE

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

SHELLEY

HETTY often wondered whether Lady Grace would speak of Mr. Leybourne, whose name she had never mentioned, even incidentally, in the girl's presence. However, one day as she was bringing Lady Grace her morning tea, a letter lay on the tray and Hetty recognized the writing as that of Leybourne. She noticed that Lady Grace opened it eagerly, and read it before she poured out her tea. Furthermore she remarked that her mistress was in unusually high spirits. In the afternoon she said:

"Hetty, I shan't wear my old tea gown tonight, but that new one that came from London the other day. We have company to dinner."

At tea Hetty asked the butler what company was expected. He said, "Old Lord Standhurst." Hetty thought it was unlikely that Lady Grace would wear her new gown in honour of his octogenarian lordship.

"Is there anyone else expected?" she ventured to inquire.

"Yes, Mr. Leybourne is spending the week-end here, but 'e don't count, 'e's one of the family.

"I was right," thought Hetty, "the letter was from Mr. Leybourne and he's coming down here to-night."

That evening Lady Grace took special pains with her toilet. Hetty with a pang at her heart assisted her mistress to dress. The girl thought that she had never seen Lady Grace look prettier, clad in a shimmery gown that suggested moonlight, and with a bright colour in her usually pale cheeks. As she stood before the long mirror, the lustre from the branched candlesticks cast a radiance on her sheeny gown.

"Hetty," she said, "hand me those camellias which I brought from the conservatory; they are in a glass on the wash-stand."

Hetty obeyed, but her hand trembled so that the delicate camellia petals loosened and fell upon the ground.

"Oh, Hetty," exclaimed Lady Grace with vexation, "how can you be so awkward? Those flowers went so well with my dress."

It was the first impatient word she had ever addressed to Hetty, and the girl flushed from sensitiveness.

"There, Hetty, don't mind, don't distress yourself. What's done cannot be undone,"

said Lady Grace, who had noticed the flush. "My gown looks just as well without those scentless flowers. Put some perfume on my handkerchief."

Hetty did so, and Lady Grace, taking one more glance at the mirror, departed, leaving Hetty feeling envious for the first time.

"What irony of fate," she thought, "that I should be obliged to deck her out to meet the man who is all the world to me." She pictured to herself, with a fierce jealous pang, Lady Grace sitting at a table covered with choice flowers and delicate silver, listening to the stimulating conversation of the man they both loved, enabled by education to take her share in the conversation.

"After all," thought Hetty, without exactly wording her thoughts, "it is only by education, which helps us towards expression, that anyone is raised above their fellow creatures. Had I had all her advantages I might, who knows, be her superior."

Hetty's heart was bursting. She added fuel to the fire of anger and discontent which was burning in her breast by conjuring up a vision of Leybourne listening with deferential tenderness to the remarks that fell from Lady Grace's lips. She saw those kind eyes, whose every expression she had learned to love and know, bent upon her mistress.

"Yes," thought Hetty bitterly, "she has

everything; wealth, education, beauty, and goodness too," she was constrained to admit. "Why should I mince matters? She is a fitting mate for him and I am ungrateful and ungenerous to grudge them their happiness."

Then hoping by work to find an antidote for her unhappy love, she set about to put the room in order and to hang up her mistress's soft garments.

Next day was Sunday and Hetty endeavoured to avoid any possibility of a chance meeting with Leybourne. In the afternoon she went out, intending to take a walk, but before five minutes had elapsed she came across Leybourne strolling with Lady Grace.

"Why, hulloa, Hetty," he called out cheerily, "don't efface yourself. I have been hearing about you. I needn't ask how you are; you do look fit. Verminster is a better place than London, eh?"

Hetty thought not, but muttered something polite and inaudible.

"Well, I am glad that you are doing me credit," he laughed. "I've had a good account of you; remember I am responsible for you."

"I see you are going for a Sunday ramble, Hetty," said Lady Grace pleasantly; "we won't detain you. Get MacPherson to show you over the green-houses; ask him to give you some flowers for your father."

Hetty, instead of feeling grateful for this kindness, felt vexed and angry. She had noticed before on several occasions that Lady Grace had contrived to throw her into the companionship of MacPherson, the head gardener, a canny Scotchman with a large salary and a nice cottage, who was on the look-out for a sensible bonny wife. Instead of availing herself of Lady Grace's proposal, she asked, somewhat ungraciously, if she might go to the convent instead to see her father.

"Certainly, Hetty; be sure to take your father some grapes and flowers," said Lady Grace, as she and Leybourne strolled on in the direction of the pleasure-grounds.

"I don't know what is the matter with Hetty, Frank," Lady Grace remarked; "she seems to be out of sorts. Perhaps she is fretting about that ne'er-do-well of a father of whom I was telling you."

"Probably she is shy among strangers and in a big house," said Leybourne carelessly. "She is looking very well, there is no need to worry about her."

Thus they quickly dismissed Hetty from their minds, they had many other subjects and their future to discuss.

In the meantime Hetty walked briskly down the drive, where she met Donald MacPherson, who invited her to take a stroll through the gardens, but she gave him a brusque negative

and then excused herself by saying that she was going to see her father. Donald would have liked to accompany her, but her manner was not encouraging, so he disconsolately betook himself to the gardens while Hetty continued her walk.

"So they would marry me to their gardener, would they?" she thought resentfully. "A very suitable person for a girl in my station of life, but they have made a mistake; indeed they have," she muttered. Her pride was up in arms; she strode along, perilously near tears, but forced them back, and taking a long breath admonished herself to be patient. She glanced around. It was a glorious day, and the lovely garb which kindly nature had donned helped in a slight degree to divert Hetty from her melancholy mood. The budding elm trees assumed tender mauves and pink hues in the sunlight, and the nimble spring air was redolent with the scent of gorse. Nature acted as both a sedative and a tonic, and when Hetty reached the convent her mood had undergone a change.

She stayed for a while talking to her father, who was visibly weaker. He spoke to her of her dead mother, whose very memory brought peace to her daughter.

When the visit to her father was over she attended Benediction in the convent chapel, and listened to the nuns, who had long since

renounced all worldly love, singing the *Tantum Ergo*. Mechanically she repeated the sonorous Latin words, she liked their sound. The service appealed to her and she returned to Verminster in a somewhat happier frame of mind.

CHAPTER XLV

A FRIEND IN AUSTRALIA

> Men are disturbed, not by things, but by the principles and notions which they form concerning things. Death, for instance, is not terrible, else it would have appeared so to Socrates. But the terror consists in our notion of death, that it is terrible.
>
> EPICTETUS

NEXT day Leybourne left Verminster, and after his departure things took their usual course. Lady Grace rode, sketched, read to her mother and looked after her poor people. Hetty, who had attained peace of mind or rather acquiesced in the inevitable, walked to the convent nearly every afternoon to spend an hour or so with her father, where she was now a welcome visitor. She had made many friends among the nuns and the orphans, several of whom were dark-eyed, vivacious little French girls who had accompanied the sisters from France. Others were the children of poor Irish parents, dark-haired little colleens, with eyes varying in every shade of grey, blue and green as are the waters of the Atlantic under an April sky. These children's soft intonation reminded Hetty of her mother's voice, and she delighted in

their society and was ever ready to romp and play with them. Then, too, she spent many pleasant hours in the laundry, which was under the charge of Sœur Gabrielle, who showed her how to make up fine laces and linen. How dazzingly white the linen looked, goffered and crisp, piled up in great snowy masses in the huge baskets. Hetty enjoyed these quiet moments spent at the convent, where she felt sheltered from the stream of life, which was turbulently passing by her, with its petty worries, its cruel disappointments its loves, and its hates.

One afternoon, on reaching the convent, she was told that her father had passed away in the night. His few possessions were given to her. They amounted to a bundle of old letters and a silver watch. He had been seized with a sudden hæmorrhage—his death had been practically painless. Hetty could not find it in her heart to grieve for him.

"He passed away quite quietly, optimistic to the last," said Sister Margaret Mary. "Indeed," she added, "I find most people die peacefully. Death steals on them generally almost imperceptibly. It is the approach of death that is so terrible, not death itself."

Next morning Hetty attended a mass in the chapel for the repose of her father's soul. She brought with her a wreath of spring flowers that Lady Grace had helped her to make, and laid it on the coffin.

After the funeral she went to her room to look over the bundle of letters her father had left her. Some of them were old letters written by her mother to Luke Marrington in the days of their courtship. These Hetty carefully put aside, but there were three other letters she was surprised to find addressed to herself, two of which were unopened. These proved to be from Dicky Bean, the farm labourer who had been at Ivy Farm. The first letter described the hardships of life at sea and all that Dicky had gone through. The second, which seemed to have been written at an interval of six months from the first, was from Melbourne, Australia, and it informed Hetty that the writer had had an offer to join a friend on a cattle ranch. As the offer seemed good Dicky wrote that he intended to avail himself of it. He expressed surprise that Hetty had not written to him. Probably her letter had miscarried. He expected that it would reach him in time. The third letter began by Dicky's expressing astonishment at not having heard from her. "Why haven't you written?" he asked, "I did not think you could forget old friends so quickly." This letter went on to say that Dicky was getting on well; his mate thought of taking him into partnership; Dicky sent her a small sum to lay out on finery.

This letter had been opened and the postal order abstracted.

"So Dicky hasn't forgotten me after all. There is somebody in the world to whom I am precious," said Hetty aloud, as she put down the letter and gave herself up to her thoughts. She wondered what she would think of Dicky were she to see him now. How far she had travelled mentally since those days at Ivy Farm. "Dear Old Dicky, he has a faithful heart," she thought; "I must write to him immediately. But what shall I say?" she wondered. "Australia is a long way off and our lives have drifted so far apart." She rose and put up the letter carefully in a shabby rosewood work-box that had been her mother's. Her heart felt lighter, and gladdened by the thought that she had one real friend.

That evening at supper, John the footman said to her, "A letter for you, Miss Marrington."

The letter was from Mrs. Flanagan, bemoaning Hetty's absence. It contained many bitter complaints of the new servant girl.

"So after all," thought Hetty, "I have my little niche in some hearts."

The hissing urn and the smart servants seemed to grow blurred and misty. Nostalgia possessed Hetty for her own little room at Gordon Square, and her humble friends there. Oh! if she could but leave stately Verminster with all its comforts, and its over-abundance of food. She longed to return to her own little attic.

Her departure from Verminster was nearer at hand than she anticipated. The very next day Lady Grace told her that she had had a letter from her maid Mason, whose health was quite restored, and who wrote saying she was again able to undertake her duties.

"She is coming back next week," said Lady Grace; "but if you wish you can remain here as assistant maid until Mason leaves for good."

But Hetty wished to return to Mrs. Flanagan, who badly wanted her, and to this Lady Grace agreed.

She did her packing very cheerfully. She was delighted at the prospect of returning to London and left the supercilious servants at Verminster without any regret. To Lady Grace she was grateful for all her kindness.

When her things were packed she went to the morning room, as she had been bidden to make her adieux to Lady Grace, who was sitting at her desk with a little heap of money piled neatly in front of her.

"Hetty," she said, "here are your wages with a little present from me as well. Tell Mr. Leybourne when you see him that I was very well satisfied with you."

"Thank you, my lady," said Hetty; "you have indeed been kind to me."

"And now, Hetty," said Lady Grace, "I have news for you. Mr. Leybourne and I are to be married in the autumn. Then Mason leaves

me as you know, and Mr. Leybourne and I have been thinking that we should like you to enter our service. I shall pay you the same wages as I pay Mason. This will be a good start in life for you."

The offer was exceedingly generous, as Mason was a trained and experienced lady's maid. When Lady Grace had finished speaking, Hetty stood by silently, unable to reply, and Lady Grace attributed her silence to an overwhelming gratitude. In vain Hetty tried to stammer something even to herself quite unintelligible.

"Don't thank me," said Lady Grace; "I have ordered the trap to drive you to the station. Good-bye for the present." She shook Hetty warmly by the hand.

Hetty moved towards the door. Just as she had reached it Lady Grace called her back and said laughingly, "Why, Hetty, you were forgetting your wages."

The girl took the money slowly from the desk, and muttering her thanks found herself outside the door without the slightest knowledge of how she came there.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE SADDEST PART OF HISTORY

Ce n'est rien,
C'est une femme qui se noie.
LA FONTAINE

DURING her homeward journey, Hetty reflected sadly on the news she had heard. Her suspicions as to Lady Grace and Leybourne were at last confirmed, and she now knew for certain that they were engaged, and felt sure they were deeply devoted to each other. She had endeavoured, by every means in her power, to conquer her unhappy love, but unfortunately, in such cases, one's will frequently counts for naught. Love generally comes to us unbidden, or at a time when we have little inclination to receive so troublesome a guest. As Hetty, feeling sad and depressed, sat in the bleak, third-class railway carriage which was carrying her back to London, the knowledge that it would be impossible for her ever to marry anyone whom she did not love grew very clear to her. Her brief union with Slater had taught her that a marriage without love was physical and moral degradation. A profound discouragement combined with vast self-pity overwhelmed her. It

seemed that, in one brief moment, life, in the fullest sense of the word, had ended for her, and she realized all that she would miss as time went by. No child would ever call her mother, and cheer her home by its bright presence. A vision of long, loveless years stretched themselves before her, a lonely old age, with beauty gone, awaited her. Yet better so than a loveless marriage. She wondered if all women's lives were equally sorrowful, and thought sadly of those women with whom she had been brought in contact from time to time. How sad their lives had been, how incomplete and uncomplaining! Then she thought of her own mother. What a sad and weary time she had had watching her husband spend on drink all the little savings she had laboured so hard to put aside!

Then Hetty thought of Sarah Fuller deserted and disgraced, left to bring up her child on pitifully small wages without any help from the participant of the responsibility, who was guiltless before the law. "Sorry justice, indeed," she thought. "Perhaps, Sarah by now has become a hardened sinner." A procession of sad-eyed women passed before her mental vision—kindly, patient Mrs. Miggens, the victim of her tyrannical husband—Mrs. Flanagan, hard-working and industrious, toiling from early morning until evening to support a lazy husband—and lastly, innumerable women she had seen when going about with Slater from music-hall

to public-house. Women whose jarring, mirthless laughter was more pitiful than tears. Women whose sad history was written on their faces, from which innocence and joy had for ever departed, and from whom she had shrunk in terror. Surely, as Herbert Spencer says, "the saddest part of history has never been written, the history of woman." "There must indeed be something very wrong with a country," thought Hetty, "that has laws inadequate for the protection of its women."

Oppressed by melancholy thoughts, she took up a paper and began reading, hoping to divert her mind and beguile her journey. As she glanced down the columns of the paper her eye fell upon four lines, sandwiched between two advertisements, one for "Pills for Pale People," and another headed "Hair Restorer."

The paragraph so flanked read thus :

"The body of an unknown woman in an extreme state of emaciation was found in the Thames yesterday."

Another paragraph, entitled "Gruesome Discovery," ran thus :

"The dead body of a woman was found by a gasfitter in a small detached house at Putney yesterday. Upstairs were the bodies of two small children. By the woman's body was a bottle of carbolic acid. Her mind had been unhinged of late by the desertion of her husband ; she was much respected in the neighbourhood."

Hetty dropped the paper quickly and looked out of the window for the remainder of her journey. She was approaching London. The setting sun was bathing the factories and suburbs in a flood of crimson light. The roar of London was in her ears, she felt her spirits rising, she was at home.

After all, Mr. Leybourne and Lady Grace were not to be married until the autumn. Hetty resolved not to think about the future. "I have several months before me still," she thought, "in which I can be happy. I will enjoy the present and afterwards—well, I'll see; perhaps I may enter the convent of Les Dames Françaises, where, if I cannot be happy, I can at least achieve peace."

But the train had stopped, and there was a woman looking into the carriage window. Surely it was Mrs. Flanagan, who had come to meet her. In another moment, Hetty was in the good woman's arms, comforted and consoled by her warm embraces.

PART III

CHAPTER XLVII

A WARM WELCOME

Where we love is home,
Home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts.

O. W. HOLMES

A WARM welcome awaited Hetty at Gordon Square. Thistle, perhaps, was the most demonstrative; he greeted her with effusive tail-waggings and joyous barks. Mr. Flanagan said she was a sight for sore eyes and even assisted the cabby to carry her trunk upstairs. Leybourne, hearing the commotion of the arrival, looked out from the studio for a moment and called out: "Welcome back, Hetty, glad to see you. My studio is in frightful disorder—you must tackle it to-morrow."

Hetty, delighted to be back amongst her friends again, was borne away by Mrs. Flanagan, who had a lavish tea prepared, and had baked a wonderful potato cake, such as, she said, no Englishwoman could make. Hetty told her how much pleasanter this meal was than the long ones at Verminster, where she had sat,

strictly according to precedence, between Mrs. Tibbets and the upper housemaid; while Mrs. Flanagan on her part recounted all she had gone through, from the incompetency of servants, during Hetty's absence, while Mr. Flanagan, regardless of his wife's remarks, read out extracts from the *Sporting Times* to which nobody paid any attention.

Presently Mrs. Flanagan interrupted his reading by saying:

"Tell Hetty about the man who called to see her while she was away."

Mr. Flanagan put down the paper with a martyred air which said plainly, "I have been sorely tried, but, Hetty, your return will not be the signal for a breach of the marital peace." So he gave the information asked for, saying:

"A tall man came here the other day inquiring for you. I judged him to be a workman. I told him you were away. He seemed disappointed."

Hetty knew that her visitor must have been Slater, and she felt that her stay at Verminster had been fruitful in good results, as her absence had prevented his seeing her.

"The fellow wanted your address," continued Mr. Flanagan, "but I did not give it to him, nor any information as to your return. The man did not please me."

Hetty felt much relieved that Slater had not been successful in tracing her movements.

The next three months passed happily enough for her. She resumed her old life. The *habitués* of the studio welcomed her back, and in her presence discussed Art, complimented her on her coffee-making, and the fashionable ladies who came to be painted petted her, and protested that no one could arrange draperies as she did. Hetty, if not buoyant, was not despondent. The time passed peacefully enough until, one day, the post brought her a letter from Slater. He wrote that he knew she had returned to Gordon Square, and begged for an interview with her. To this letter Hetty did not reply. A week passed ere it was followed by another letter from Slater asking Hetty to meet him on Saturday afternoon, when he would be free. Would she have tea with him at an aerated bread shop not far from Gordon Square; he wanted to see her "most particular."

Hetty, feeling that no good could come of the interview and that it would be painful to her, wrote to him thus:

"I cannot have tea with you as you suggest on Saturday next, though I, too, am free on Saturday afternoon. There is no use in our meeting; to me it would recall much that is painful. Forget me, determine to put me out of your mind—Hetty."

When she had stamped and closed the letter she carried it to the post office herself.

CHAPTER XLVIII

MR. FLANAGAN GETS INTO TROUBLE

Palma non sine pulvere.
LATIN PROVERB

LEYBOURNE'S success as a painter brought him much labour. He was constantly at work and was in London all June, and most of July, busy painting a distinguished member of the Cabinet. At last the picture was completed, and Leybourne felt that he had earned a holiday. He determined to go to Verminster for a week or ten days. Before leaving London he dined with Dawlish at his club. Dawlish was in high spirits, for his opera was to be produced at Leipsic. Leybourne left his friend at about twelve o'clock, and the evening being fine and warm, walked home. On reaching his lodgings he was surprised to find a man on the doorstep, apparently fumbling at the keyhole.

"What are you doing here?" inquired Leybourne, sternly at first, thinking the man might be harbouring some felonious intention.

The man said respectfully, but with a slight thickness of utterance, which led Leybourne to suppose he had been drinking:

"Beg pardon, sir, I was only looking at the

number. I see I have made a mistake." So saying he touched his hat and walked away.

"Some drunken fellow trying to find some place or somebody," thought Leybourne as he went upstairs to his room. Next day he went to Verminster.

The day after his departure Mrs. Flanagan, greatly perturbed, with a letter in her hand, came to Hetty.

"Here's a nice to-do," she said, waving the letter about excitedly. After a time she explained that Mr. Flanagan, who had been absent from home for some time without leave, had managed to get into conflict with a welsher at Lewes races.

It seemed that the welsher, besides being a bookmaker, was a professional boxer in the non-racing season, and the encounter resulted in the survival of the fittest. Mr. Flanagan was badly worsted and much bruised.

"I shall have to go to him," said Mrs. Flanagan, almost in tears. "Goodness knows how badly he may be hurt, and he without a soul to look after him. See what comes of going off racing unbeknownst to me. He never listens to me. I could never make my own of him."

Hetty understood this to mean that Mr. Flanagan was adamant to good advice, but Mrs. Flanagan, who took pride in her husband's good looks and social gifts, continued:

"'Tis but natural that he should like to be amused, for he's genial and sociable, and takes no small pride in his good looks. I hope he won't be disfigured."

Hetty could not forbear a smile, but she comforted the good woman as best she could.

"I'll catch the next train to Lewes," said Mrs. Flanagan. "I hope to get back before night, but if I don't you must only get on as best you can without me. Oh! to think that I should have such a putting about."

Hetty remarked that, perhaps, after all, Mr. Flanagan would prove to be but little hurt.

"That's true for you," said Mrs. Flanagan. "To be sure he always made a fearful fuss if his finger did but ache. It is the nature of the males to complain, so it is."

With many such lamentations, Mrs. Flanagan betook herself to Lewes, armed with hartshorn and oil to anoint the bruises of her well-drubbed spouse.

CHAPTER XLIX

A MIDNIGHT VISITOR

Some kill their love when they are young,
And some when they are old;
Some strangle with the hands of lust,
Some with the hands of gold;
The kindest use a knife, because
The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long;
Some sell and others buy;
Some do the deed with many tears
And some without a sigh.
For each man kills the thing he loves,
Yet each man does not die.

FROM THE BALLAD OF READING JAIL

EVENING closed in and Mrs. Flanagan did not return. Hetty concluded that the anxious woman had determined to spend the night by the bedside of her disabled husband. She sat up waiting until after eleven o'clock, then she locked the hall door, called Thistle, and mounted the high staircase. By the dim light of the candle which she held in her hand, the house seemed dark and desolate, and she was glad to reach her own room and turn on the gas. It looked bright and cheery up there, and Hetty glanced round it affectionately. She had decorated the walls with some gay pictures from

Christmas numbers, and over the meagre little wooden mantelshelf was a picture of Leybourne, cut out from some newspaper, and entitled "A Celebrity of the Artistic World." Near this was a rough sketch of herself, which Leybourne had once made of her, and, being dissatisfied with it, had consigned it to the waste-paper basket, whence it was rescued by Hetty. On the mantelpiece in a cheap vase were the ferns and grasses which she had brought home on that memorable day of the motor expedition to the orchard where Leybourne had commenced the picture of her which had rendered him famous. These withered tokens recalled the happiest day of her life; to her they were unspeakably dear. Her window (about four tiny panes of glass) looked on to the Mews, where the lights in the small houses were fast being extinguished. As Hetty pulled down the blind she thought to herself, "How high and lonely I am up here all by myself among the stars, quite like 'the high-born maiden in her palace tower,' that Mr. Dawlish used to read about." Thistle had jumped into his bed, an old hamper made comfortable by a cushion.

"Good night, old boy," said Hetty. Thistle responded by a feeble wag of his tail.

Hetty took off her dress and slipped into a loose, print dressing-gown. She then let down her long hair and began brushing it energetically. Suddenly she arrested the brush in mid-air.

What was that creaking sound she heard? Could it be a step upon the stairs? Her heart beat fast. Perhaps the creaking was caused by the scamper of a mouse on the carpetless landing. She put down her brush and listened intently. The sound came again; a step seemed to approach her room. She glanced towards the basket where Thistle was. He was sitting up, his ears pricked as he emitted a low growl. The handle of the door was turned stealthily and, in another second, a man stood in the middle of the room. It was Slater. The terrified girl dare not ask herself what sinister purpose brought him. How strange he looked! There was something wolfish about his eyes, which glittered wrathfully. Even Thistle had ceased to growl, and was hanging his head as if he too were frightened.

Slater glanced round the room curiously, and for a moment his savage mood almost relented. Hetty looked so child-like in her white dressing-gown that, all unbidden, there rose in Slater's mind a picture he had once seen of a Breton country girl, entitled "The First Communicant." There was just the same expression of awe and candour in Hetty's eyes as was depicted in the eyes of the Breton girl. For a second Slater's heart softened, and, had not his glance fallen upon the portrait of Leybourne, which stung him to a passion of jealous rage, he might have left the room and renounced Hetty for ever.

But the portrait bore witness to the social and moral distance between him and the man he considered his successful rival. "No, he shall never have her," he thought, for he put a low interpretation on Hetty's friendship with the artist.

Up to this they had stood gazing at each other silently. Then Slater spoke.

"'Etty," he said, "I have come 'ere to-night to ask you for the last time to come back to me. I 'ave watched this 'ouse for days on purpose to get a word with you. It were better for you to come away with me."

'Etty's courage had returned.

"No," she said, "do you think I am likely to care for the man who has caused such misery in my life?"

"The reason you won't come with me," said Slater, "is that you love that fellow." As he spoke he jerked his thumb in the direction of Leybourne's picture.

"If he were here to-night," said Hetty, "it would not be long before he turned you out of this house."

Slater approached her, and said in whining tones:

"'Etty, dear 'Etty, don't be so 'ard; you know when a man 'as set his 'eart upon a girl he's allus wanting to see 'er, allus thinkin' of 'er, allus dreamin' of 'er, and he takes the first opportunity he can of seeing 'er. 'E don't

bother whether 'e knocks at the front door or whether 'e creeps in by the back."

As he spoke Slater caught Hetty's arm and held it fast, but the girl wrenched herself free of him, and glanced round the room to see if escape were possible. Could she get to the window and call out? The dressing-table was between her and it, and even if she succeeded in opening the window it was improbable that she would be heard in the Mews. Slater was between her and the door.

"'Etty, will you come away with me?" asked Slater, striding towards her with menacing aspect.

Hetty drew farther and farther away from him until she was against the wall. The two stood watching each other—the girl with the courage of despair, for she knew that screaming in an empty house was unavailing.

"You have treated me shameful," said Slater, seizing her and holding her fast against the wall. He had come there that night intent on frightening the girl, and to coerce her to accompany him home, but had not reckoned on Hetty's strength of character. The picture of Leybourne, distinguished and handsome, and the knowledge of Hetty's love for the artist, had worked him into a frenzy of rage. He had come without any definite plan beyond that of endeavouring to induce her to return to him by frightening her. He had that in his pocket

which he hoped would compel submission. He had not counted on the girl's undaunted courage. He was fast losing all control of himself.

"You'll 'ave reason to rue the day you cast me off," he said savagely.

As he spoke he put his hand into his pocket and drew forth something which flashed before the girl's eyes.

"Sam," she said, "put back that razor. What evil purpose brought you out to-night? Have a care that you'll not regret this night for the rest of your life."

Slater caught her by the shoulder and shook her violently. She struggled to free herself, but he had her fast, and gazed at her with a ruthless ferocity.

"Let me go, let me go!" she cried. Then life became inexpressibly dear to her.

"Oh, Sam, let me live," she pleaded. "Let me enjoy the air and sunshine of life yet awhile."

"You did not care much about my enjoyment when you left me," retorted Slater fiercely. "You want to live for your lover, eh?"

Hetty did not answer, but her eyes travelled to Leybourne's picture. Were he but there to protect her!

Slater noticed the glance. It further infuriated him and sealed her doom. In another second he had swept the razor across the girl's throat.

Hetty struggled no longer, a warm fluid fell

upon the man's hands, and he became conscious of the awful deed he had committed.

" 'Etty, 'Etty!" he cried, releasing his grasp.

There was no answer, and an inanimate object fell to the ground with a heavy thud.

God! What had he done! He was a murderer.

With this knowledge, the instinct of self-preservation grew strong upon him, he must save himself. Thistle had crawled from his basket and lay at Hetty's feet, whining and looking at Slater with accusing eyes. Slater's glance then fell upon his blood-stained hands, as they still clasped the razor. What should he do with it? Holding it aloof from his person lest it should fleck his clothes with blood, he hastily thrust it into the dead girl's still warm hand. He hurried to the washstand. There was water in the basin; little more than half an hour ago Hetty had washed her hands. He plunged his into the water and dried them on the towel. Then he turned up the collar of his coat, pushed his hat over his eyes, and groped his way downstairs. In another moment he was in the open air, a warm rain falling upon his throbbing brow. He glanced round and walked quickly down the street. At the corner a cabman looked at him with curiosity. Slater hurried on until he reached the door of his lodgings. When he had noiselessly let himself in with his latch-key, a

thought struck him. What was he to do with the latch-key he had made and by means of which he had gained admittance to the house in Gordon Square? If seen in his possession, it would afford a clue to his guilt. He must speedily rid himself of it. He would throw it into the Serpentine in the morning early—his work took him down Kensington way—but he must rest now, he must try and get some sleep. He must husband his strength, for he dare not ask himself what dreadful ordeal might lie before him. He undressed mechanically and went to bed.

CHAPTER L

SHOCKING NEWS

Elle était du monde, où les plus belles choses
Ont le pire destin.
Et rose, elle a vecu que vivent les roses
L'espace d'un matin.

Two days after Hetty's murder, Lady Grace and Leybourne were sitting in the breakfast room at Verminster. The window was open and the scent of new-mown hay pervaded the room, while the hum of bees, busy among the mignonette beds outside the window, was faintly audible. Lady Grace and Frank were *tête-à-tête,* as Lady Verminster was breakfasting in her room. Though the meal had almost come to a close the morning papers lay upon the table, their wrappers still uncut.

"Grace, you have idled me shockingly," said Frank, laughing. "I have not opened my paint box since my arrival here, nor answered a letter, nor read a paper. The Germans may have landed at Queensboro' for all I know."

"Like Adam," said Lady Grace, "you blame the woman. You forget that you have idled me, the fault is just as much yours as mine. We have been deliciously indolent, but now

our spell of idleness must end. Henceforth I shall insist upon your taking an intelligent interest in the welfare of your country."

As she spoke she opened a paper, and glancing down its columns, began reading aloud :

" Are more Dreadnoughts wanted ? An early Dissolution probable. Collapse of German Air-ship." Then with a sigh she read, " Another Girl found murdered in London."

" Is it not shocking, Frank," she said, " to hear of so many women being murdered ? Day after day I read of women being cruelly done to death from motives of jealousy or, indeed, sometimes because they wish to get away from some tyrant and lead a better life."

" You ought not to read such things if they make such an impression upon you," said Frank.

Lady Grace did not reply to this remark. She had turned deadly pale.

" What is the matter, Grace ? " Frank asked in surprise.

Her trembling lips made no answer, she handed him the paper and pointed to the following paragraph :

" Yesterday the body of a girl, named Hetty Marrington, apparently about twenty years of age, was found in the top room of a house in Gordon Square. The throat was cut from ear to ear; there was a razor in her hand, but her wounds do not seem to have been self-inflicted. The girl was a domestic in the service of a Mrs.

Flanagan, by whom the body was discovered on her return from the country. It was then quite cold, so that the girl must have been dead some hours. On going to press last night we heard there had been an arrest in connection with the murder."

"Oh! Frank, how terrible!" said Lady Grace with tears in her eyes. "Dear, dear little Hetty! Poor, simple little soul! So young too! Who could possibly have borne her a grudge?"

"I don't know," said Frank, quite overwhelmed, "unless it might be that scoundrel who went through a mock marriage with her. She was very reticent about him. I often thought she wished to put a painful past quite away from her. But I shall go instantly to London and see if I can get any light upon the matter."

"Do, dear Frank, do, lose no time," said Lady Grace.

In less than an hour after the sad news had reached Verminster, Leybourne was on his way to London.

CHAPTER LI

THE TRIAL

> Laws are like cobwebs, which may catch small flies, but let wasps and hornets break through.
>
> SWIFT

A FOGGY day four months later. Samuel Slater was on his trial at the Old Bailey for the murder of Hetty Marrington. As the case was likely to be a sensational one, the court was crowded, and many were the curious glances directed towards the dock, where Slater sat, sprucely attired, carrying himself with an elaborately nonchalant air. Notwithstanding his apparent unconcern, his face had grown haggard, and his small, restless eyes travelled round the court, which was artificially lighted. The judge sat upon the bench, imposing in his robes of scarlet and ermine. Below him were the counsel for the prosecution and defence, and the solicitors. Places in court were reserved for the witnesses. There were Mr. Miggens, somewhat more portly than when Hetty had been in his service, and Mrs. Miggens, more timid and subdued than of yore; Mrs. Flanagan, pale and sad, with Mr. Flanagan beside her. Leybourne was also present. The famous artist was an object

of much interest. He and Lady Grace had been married shortly before, and she, though not actually present in court, was holding herself in readiness for a summons at any moment.

Slater pleaded "Not Guilty" in a resolute voice.

When the jury had been called and had taken their seats in the jury-box, the leading counsel for the prosecution rose to state the case for the crown.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, "a very grave issue is to be determined by you. The life or death of the prisoner at the bar depends upon your verdict. If his guilt is not established before you beyond a reasonable doubt, you must acquit him; but if, upon the other hand, you are satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt of his guilt, it will be your duty, no matter how painful that duty may be, to find him guilty of the grave crime with which he is charged. No doubt there is, at the present moment, a wide-spread feeling of indignation, caused by the many similar murders which have recently occurred—murders by which defenceless women have been suddenly precipitated into the presence of their God, and which have been committed by ruthless men, who came to them in the guise of lovers, and who did not vouchsafe their victims an instant in which to breathe a prayer. I mention this simply to warn you,

gentlemen, to beg of you, not to permit yourselves to be in any way influenced by this most melancholy condition of things. You will try this man on the evidence that will be produced against him—upon that alone—and I will now detail to you, as simply as I can, what that evidence is.

"The girl Marrington and the prisoner had been acquainted for some years. They had met in Kent, where she was born, and where she was in the service of a man named Miggens. She was a girl of singularly attractive appearance, and of gentle and amiable disposition, and seems to have given her employers satisfaction. The prisoner is a locksmith, a journeyman locksmith, and a very capable workman. This fact I wish to impress upon you. Well, the prisoner seems to have become infatuated with the girl. He persuaded her to leave her situation and accompany him to Canterbury, promising to marry her there. But he basely deceived her by going through a sham marriage, performed by an unfrocked clergyman, named King, who has since fled the country. Slater could not legally marry, as he had a wife then alive. Deceased went to London with the accused, but after a time she left him on discovering that she was not legally married. She kept her whereabouts concealed from him, but he discovered her after a while. In the meantime his wife died, and he was desirous of marrying the

deceased, but she had found kind friends and refused to have anything to say to him. He seems to have persistently dogged and watched her movements to such an extent that she preferred to remain indoors rather than run the risk of meeting him, though he sent her several letters begging her to do so. These letters were found amongst the girl's things.

"She does not seem to have granted his request, but Slater was determined to see her and planned a very ingenious way of doing so. He is a locksmith, gentlemen, as I have already told you. What then was easier than for him to make a latch-key for the house in Gordon Square, and watch for a favourable opportunity to let himself quietly in ? One night, Mr. Leybourne, the artist, on coming home from some social function, saw the prisoner fumbling at the lock and Mrs. Flanagan will tell you that next morning she observed greasy finger-marks on the hall door round the keyhole, and a particle of wax adhering to the door just beside the lock. These finger-prints were photographed, and the vertical lines correspond in appearance and number with the lines on the prisoner's finger-tips. Slater had evidently made a latch-key to fit the lock, and when opportunity favoured him, stole into the girl's room, probably to compel her to return to him. But she plainly resisted his overtures, and the razor, which had been originally intended as a means of intimida-

tion, became the instrument of murder. Then, with fiendish ingenuity, he placed the razor in the girl's hand, so as to make it appear that the wounds had been self-inflicted. But clever as he was, he made a mistake, one of those mistakes so often fatal to criminals. In his eagerness to quit the ghastly scene he placed the razor in the girl's left hand. Now, I have no doubt," said counsel, "my learned friend here, counsel for the defence, will put forward a left-handed theory, that is to say, he will endeavour to prove that the deceased was left-handed. But this theory will not hold water. The murderer must have washed his hands after the deed, so that this does away at once with any suspicion of suicide.

"Mrs. Flanagan and her husband both identify the prisoner as the man they had noticed watching their house. Why was the prisoner seen on various occasions prowling round the house in Gordon Square? What criminal intent brought him there? This is a question, gentlemen, that you must ask yourselves.

"The girl does not seem to have had a single enemy. There was no person, other than the man in the dock, who could have had any motive in committing this terrible deed.

"Hetty Marrington was last seen alive on the evening of July 22, by a milkman named Bent, who supplied the milk at Gordon Square. She was then to all appearance in her usual health and spirits. She did not require the same

quantity of milk that evening. She was quite alone, her mistress having been suddenly called away to the bedside of her sick husband. This, gentlemen, is a very significant circumstance, as no one was aware of the landlady's absence except some person who had been watching the house, and Slater was that person. You will hear how a cabman saw him at the corner of Gordon Square on the night of the 22nd. All these facts will be submitted to you, and my sole appeal to you is to do justice—justice by all, the prisoner at the bar, the dead girl, the community at large."

Counsel, having concluded his statement on the part of his prosecution, the evidence was gone through in detail. The doctors, having stated that the wounds could not be self-inflicted, Mrs. Flanagan was called, and deposed to finding the body on her return from the country, and described the state of the room. She recollected seeing the prisoner on two occasions pass before the window, and had no doubt as to the identity of the accused. On cross-examination, she admitted that the girl had on one occasion stayed out without permission; she had been sent out to post a letter but had not returned for over an hour.

"Had she given any reason for the delay?" asked counsel for the defence.

"She said that she had met a friend, she did not say who the friend was."

"Had she ever spoken of a lover?"

"No."

"Exert your memory," said counsel. "Had she ever spoken of a lover?"

"No, never," said the witness.

"Did she never speak of any friends?"

"Yes, she once spoke of a friend whom she knew in Kent, and who had gone away to sea; she said she heard from him lately, that was all she said."

"So she spoke of a sailor, did she?" said counsel for the defence, looking at the jury.

"She didn't say the man was a sailor," said Mrs. Flanagan.

"That will do, madam," said counsel hurriedly, "you can leave the box."

Leybourne's evidence occupied nearly an hour. In answer to questions put to him by counsel for the prosecution, he said that Hetty's conduct had been exemplary while in Mrs. Flanagan's service. He was asked if he had known of Slater's existence and said that the girl had spoken to him of a sham marriage at their first m . . . .

But here the prisoner's counsel sprang to his feet, and assuming an expression of righteous indignation, exclaimed in pained accents, "My lord! My lord! I object to this. What the girl said is certainly not evidence."

"Better not press the question," said the judge, with a note of incertitude in his voice.

"I am altogether in your lordship's hands," said counsel for the prosecution, as he sat down.

In reply to counsel for defence, the witness said that Hetty had never complained to him of being dogged. She had sat to him for her picture. She was not an artist's model; he had given her occasional presents of money for services rendered to him, but not for sitting to him. She had never asked him for anything.

He was asked to tell the jury all he knew about the deceased and he did so, adding that he and his wife thought most highly of her.

When cross-examined as to the man whom he had seen on the steps of Gordon Square, he said that he had no doubt that man was the prisoner.

Mr. Miggens was the next witness; his conscience was ill at ease as regarded his conduct towards Hetty, and he greatly feared that something, little to his credit, might transpire. Deceased had a step-mother, he said, and in taking her into his service he had been actuated by motives of pure charity. The girl had worked well, but he had reason to speak to her on account of the levity of her conduct with the prisoner; he could not say that he was altogether pleased with Hetty, he considered her flighty.

Mrs. Miggens was then called and unconsciously refuted everything her husband had said, stating that Mr. Miggens had found Hetty satisfactory, and that she had no cause for

complaint, and had liked the girl. Mr. Miggens had always praised Hetty to her.

Mr. Miggens glared at his wife during her examination, and when she rejoined him, whispered viciously that a fool was worse than a knave.

The cabman who had seen Slater at the corner of Gordon Square, could not positively identify him; the evening was dark and Slater's collar was upturned, but he believed the accused to be the man he had seen.

A prison expert was produced to prove the correspondence between the finger-prints photographed and the prisoner's finger-tips.

When the proceedings had reached this point the court adjourned until next day, as it was getting late.

CHAPTER LII

THE VERDICT

The law's made to take care o' raskills.
GEORGE ELIOT

ON the second day of the trial Mrs. Miggens was recalled by counsel for the defence, and asked if she had any reasons to believe that the girl had a lover. She answered in the negative.

Had she ever spoken of a sailor? Witness could not remember.

"Come, jog your memory, Mrs. Higgens."

"Miggens, please," said Mrs. Miggens, drawing herself up.

"I beg your pardon," said counsel with mock politeness. "Mrs. Miggens, kindly try and think if the girl ever said anything about a sailor."

Mrs. Miggens said, after much thinking, that "Hetty had spoken about a friend who she believed had gone to sea."

"That will do, Mrs. Higgens or Miggens," said counsel.

There was a titter in court as Mrs. Miggens stepped down from the witness-box.

The witnesses for the defence were then called;

they consisted of one or two workmen who had worked with Slater and who gave him a good character, saying that he was an excellent locksmith. A wealthy ironmonger, in whose service the prisoner had been for some months, said that he had always given him satisfaction and that he considered him capable, industrious and respectable. Slater's landlady stated that she had not heard the hall door open or shut on the night of the 22nd. On going to the prisoner's room with an evening paper at half past nine o'clock, she had found him reading by candle light; he had slippers on at the time. He had not spoken to her of going out. The razor was produced. The woman was asked if she knew it to be the prisoner's razor. She said, to her knowledge, she had not seen it before. The prisoner kept his razors locked up.

All the evidence having now been submitted to the jury, the court adjourned until the following day. As it was likely to be the last day of the trial, the court was densely packed. A photograph taken from Leybourne's picture of Hetty was produced and examined with eagerness, the judge himself looking at it with curiosity. It was a large photograph, and when it passed close to the dock the prisoner's eyes fell upon it. For the first time he showed signs of emotion, his features quivered slightly, but he soon mastered his feelings.

Then the counsel for the defence rose to

address the jury. He was young, eloquent, ambitious, and had yet his name to make. The case was a difficult one, and if he could get a verdict in favour of the prisoner great fame awaited him. He began his address by endeavouring to blacken Hetty's character.

"I don't," he said, "wish to say anything that may seem hard on the dead girl, but yet I cannot allow any false delicacy to deter me from the discharge of my duty to the prisoner whom I am here to defend to the best of my ability. We have all greatly admired the portrait painted by the artist, Leybourne, who befriended the girl and who gave her such an excellent character, but we must remember that Mr. Leybourne is young, enthusiastic and gifted with the artistic temperament. He met a girl so pretty that he was moved to paint her portrait and believed all she told him about herself. His poetic imagination endowed her with every virtue, but we who are not artists must not give rein to our imagination, but apply ourselves to the hard facts of the case, must be above all practical. Now where did Mr. Leybourne first meet the girl Marrington? According to his own statement in a police court, where she was charged with shoplifting, of which she was acquitted. But that morning she had been in the company of a woman of loose character, named Emma White, who had been sentenced some years before to a month's imprisonment for a similar

offence. Gentlemen, let us dwell no longer on this girl's beauty, of which we have heard so much. This is not a court where the judgment of Paris is to be repeated, and the golden apple awarded to beauty, but it is a court of justice where a poor working man is on solemn trial for his life. And now let us ask ourselves who this paragon of virtue, Hetty Marrington, really was ? She was the daughter of a spendthrift Kentish farmer whose house and farm were seized by bailiffs. Her father died a pauper in the convent of Les Dames Françaises, a charitable institution. Her stepmother is at present undergoing a term of imprisonment for fraud. So much for the girl's home and early associations. Having quarrelled with her parents she left home and entered the service of the highly esteemed and charitable Mr. Miggens, who was anxious to give her a start in life but who found fault with her for levity of conduct. Then we have a story of a sham marriage, but are there any substantial proofs of this marriage ? " Counsel paused dramatically before he continued : " We are told the girl came to London with the prisoner. She had been frequently seen at the Golden Sheaf and other public-houses in the district, and also at the Eastern Varieties Music Hall. Is it not possible that in some of these places a pretty girl like her may have made the acquaintance of some unscrupulous man ? Mrs. Flanagan said

the girl sometimes spoke of a sailor who may have murdered her and then taken ship. No doubt the poor girl was the victim of a great crime, but the question for you to decide is, whether the evidence satisfies you beyond all reasonable doubt that the prisoner is the author of the crime.

"The evidence is wholly insufficient to establish the prisoner's guilt. I submit there is no proof that he entered the house in Gordon Square that night. The cabman failed to identify him. No one saw him leave the house in Gordon Square on the evening of the 22nd. His landlady deposed to seeing him sitting by the fire smoking his pipe, and reading a book an hour before the murder was committed. Tired out from his work he was enjoying a well-earned rest. Surely sitting in an easy chair with slippers on, smoking, does not indicate a guilty purpose? Where is the latch-key that the prisoner is supposed to have made? Mr. Leybourne saw a man on the steps of the house in Gordon Square a few nights before the murder, and although he only saw him for a few seconds, had but a passing glance at him, he says he has now no doubt as to the man's identity! Is it not very possible that Mr. Leybourne may be mistaken, as he said that when he saw the man at the door that night he believed him to be some intoxicated wanderer, as in all probability he was? We were told that the girl would not see Slater, but

I have the fragment of a letter which, pieced together, reads thus."

He produced some bits of paper (which Slater had skilfully manipulated unknown to his solicitor or counsel), and read part of Hetty's last letter to Slater. " ' I can [not was missing] meet you on Saturday afternoon, free too. Hetty.' This then," said counsel, " is the girl who we are told refused to see prisoner. She clearly indicates her willingness to see him; why then should he seek a clandestine interview with her ? I maintain there is not a particle of evidence to hang this man.

" Now as to the alleged correspondence of finger-prints. I ask, is it possible of all the men in the world no two could be found with identical finger-marks ? And it is upon the assumption that no two such finger-marks could exist that the evidence of the enthusiastic expert rests. Now, gentlemen, I conclude, and let me appeal to you, though I feel the appeal is entirely unnecessary, to remember that the life of an humble artizan is as precious in the eye of God and ought to be in the estimation of man as that of the first noble in the land."

Having concluded his defence counsel sat down, much pleased by his own eloquence. The judge, who did not seem to have any original ideas upon the case, summed up briefly. He left the case for the jury's decision. The evidence on both sides had been gone into so

thoroughly that little remained for him to say. The question for the jury to decide was, was it satisfactorily proved that the prisoner had been with the girl that night? The latch-key which prisoner was supposed to have made was not forthcoming. Of course the prisoner might have rid himself of it. Did the razor by which the deed was committed belong to the prisoner? Grave suspicion was not proof. If there was any doubt in their minds the prisoner was entitled to the benefit of that doubt.

The judge, having concluded his colourless, indeed somewhat platitudinous address, the jury retired. The judge left the bench and a hum of conversation arose. Mr. Miggens began noisily munching sandwiches which he took from a black leather handbag.

In half an hour the court reassembled, and the jury, amid a hush of expectation, returned a verdict of "Not Guilty."

CHAPTER LIII

A TWENTIETH-CENTURY HERO

> The public! Why, the public's nothing better than a great baby.
>
> CHALMERS

LESS than a week after Slater's acquittal, on a clear frosty night, when the stars scintillated in a deep sapphire-hued sky, a broad-chested stalwart young colonial stood by the stage door of the Eastern Varieties Music Hall. He seemed to be waiting for some one. The stage door was situated in a side street, which was comparatively deserted. Not even a policeman was to be seen there, although there were two at the front entrance helping to procure cabs for the more obviously wealthy among the audience, in expectation of tips. The man grew tired of standing and began to stamp up and down the street, always keeping a vigilant eye upon the stage door, which was presently opened, and a workman, who had been turning on the limelights, stepped out into the street on his way home.

"What time does the performance conclude?" the workman was asked by the young colonial, who was no other than our old friend,

Dicky Bean, lately arrived from Australia. He had left his ranch on receipt of Hetty's letter and was now well-to-do. He had always loved Hetty, and had returned to London with the intention of marrying her if she would have him. He and she were to return to Australia together. Such were his plans, but his heart burned with indignation on his arrival in London to find the great city rejoicing at the acquittal of Slater, for whom he was now waiting.

"The performance ought to be over in twenty minutes," said the workman, who seemed anxious to enter into conversation with his interrogator; "but the performances have been long lately; that fellow, Slater, who was had up for the murder of the girl, Marrington, is drawing a crowd. He was coming on just as I was leaving. He is sure to get an encore though he ain't much of a performer."

"I've been a long time out of this country," said Dicky Bean," and it seems to me to be playing a low game to cadge for an audience with a murderer as a bait."

The workman smiled as he replied:

"I myself would prefer to see good dancing or juggling, but there's no accounting for taste. In the music-hall in the next street they have a man on who owes forty thousand pounds. He passed himself off as a foreign swell, lied most artistically, dodged his creditors in an

aeroplane, which, of course, he did not pay for and is now doing a breakdown."

"Seems to me," said Dick Bean, "that England's gone mad. I'll ship home to Australia. I have had about enough of civilization, I'm thinking. Why, I saw a lady arrested in Trafalgar Square yesterday for saying that women wanted votes as a means towards the betterment of humanity. She was marched off pretty quick, I can tell you."

"It's a strange world," said the workman laconically, "but I must be off or I'll have beans from my missus. Good night."

So saying he moved off whistling.

"It is indeed a strange world," said Dicky aloud, repeating the workman's words. "A sad world. When a murderer is the people's idol, a sorry sort of hero indeed! Faugh! a twentieth-century hero! Fancy crowds flocking to a music-hall to see a man whose sole attraction is that he was charged with murder."

Just then the stage door again opened, and this time Slater, clad in a new fur-lined coat, stepped into the street. He looked up in surprise when he saw a tall young man making straight towards him.

"Take that," said Dicky, striking him a blow across the face, "and learn that there is at least some justice outside a court of law."

Slater made no answer, but a dangerous light came into his eyes; he suddenly twisted round and tried to catch Dicky unprepared.

"You would, you viper," said Bean, "come on and fight, you coward. This time you will find to your cost that it isn't a woman you have got to deal with."

The two men rushed upon each other and fell upon the ground struggling. But Slater was no match for his antagonist. Since the trial, which had shattered his nerves, he had been drinking. Dicky flung him from him, bruised and seemingly unconscious. By this time a crowd had somehow managed to gather. A cry of "the police are coming" was raised. A wan pale woman shook Dicky by the arm.

"Be off," she said, "he'll come to all right. You're a brave man to come forward to avenge a poor girl done to death. God help us poor women."

Then turning to the crowd she said:

"Make way for him."

The crowd which had enjoyed the fight now parted, and Dicky, knowing that he would be arrested for assault if he stayed longer, made good his escape.

When the police came upon the scene it was to find Slater getting up slowly, much cut and bruised, though no bones were actually broken. It would be some time before he could again

appear in a music-hall. Perhaps before he will be able to resume his present avocation of music-hall artist, a fickle public will have found another hero.

EPILOGUE

SHORTLY after his encounter with Slater, Dicky Bean returned to Australia, where he rose to a position of considerable eminence. He has not married nor has he ever returned to the mother-country, but wherever there is good work to be done in the land of his adoption, he is to be found.

Leybourne and Lady Grace are happy in each other's love. They enjoy the delight of real comradeship. Leybourne's success as an artist continues undiminished. Both he and his wife bear a faithful and affectionate remembrance of Hetty, who is buried in the quiet graveyard attached to the convent of Les Dames Françaises. Leybourne often says to Lady Grace that his success as a painter was mainly due to Hetty. Never will he again find such a patient, willing model. Her picture was the foundation of his fame.

Did he ever discover the dead girl's secret love for him ? The knowledge of it was gradually borne in upon him during and after the trial, until it became both a revelation and a conviction. He recalled a thousand little instances,

her face lighting up with joy when she saw him, her smile for him. But of this Lady Grace knows nothing, the secret is between him and the dead. In silence Hetty's love was born, in silence it died.

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS

WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH DAY AND TO $1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY OVERDUE.

SEP 30 1933

SEP 26 1934

MAR 20 1935

YB 33561

292415

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY